TOMOMI YAMASHITA

8

Apothecarius Argentum

ARGENT'S RETURN SPURS THE GROWING CONSPIRACIES!

At long last, Argent returns to the Kingdom of Beazol, though in disguise because the King has banned him. With the cure to his poisonous condition already implanted in his body and beginning to do its work, Argent is finally able to touch his beloved Princess Primula, even if he has to do it as his new alter ego. But Primula's wedding to Prince Lorca is looming and enemies are conspiring to sabotage the event. There are plots to kill the King and Lorca and frame Argent for the crimes. Beazol is no longer a safe place and before it's all over, Primula is going to have to make a very difficult choice.

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$9.99 USA $12.99 CAN

ISBN: 978-1-4012-2227-7

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MILD VIOLENCE

ADULT THEMES

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Apothecarius Argentum

Volume 8

By Tomomi Yamashita

King Adonis
The New King of Navara

Prince Daniel

Lorca
The Prince of Navara, a Neighboring Kingdom
Lorca wants to Marry the Princess.

Garna
The Royal Chef

Cotila
A Mysterious Basilisk

The King Of Beazol
Rumored to be cruel and Childhood friend that dotes on the Princess

Argent was fed poison during his youth, which turned him into a "Basilisk", a person whose entire body is poisonous. Due to his immunity to poison, he was then employed by the King of Beazol to be his daughter's food taster, but she eventually helped him to flee the palace.

Several years later, argent reappeared to princess primula as an apothecary who can cure any disease. Eventually, he became the Royal Apothecary. And along with his apprentice, soda, spent his days healing the citizens of Beazol.

However, one day, prince Lorca from the neighboring country of Navara showed up and proposed marriage to the princess. This resulted in a hasty peace treaty between the two countries.

Meanwhile, Argent embarked on a journey to Castoria, a country to the east, to search for a method of detoxifying his body. There, he met Lulu, a doctor and former Basilisk, who eventually revealed to him. How he could make his body normal. Now, Argent is set on returning to the Princess, but..

Apothecarius Argentum

Character Introductions
and Summary Of Previous Volume

Princess Primula
Strong willed Daughter Of The King Of Beazol
Known As The "Princess Of Steel"

Argent
Princess Primula's Former Food Taster. Currently, The Royal Apothecary

Carli
The Princess Etiquette Instructor

Soda
Argent's Apprentice

Apothecarius Argentum

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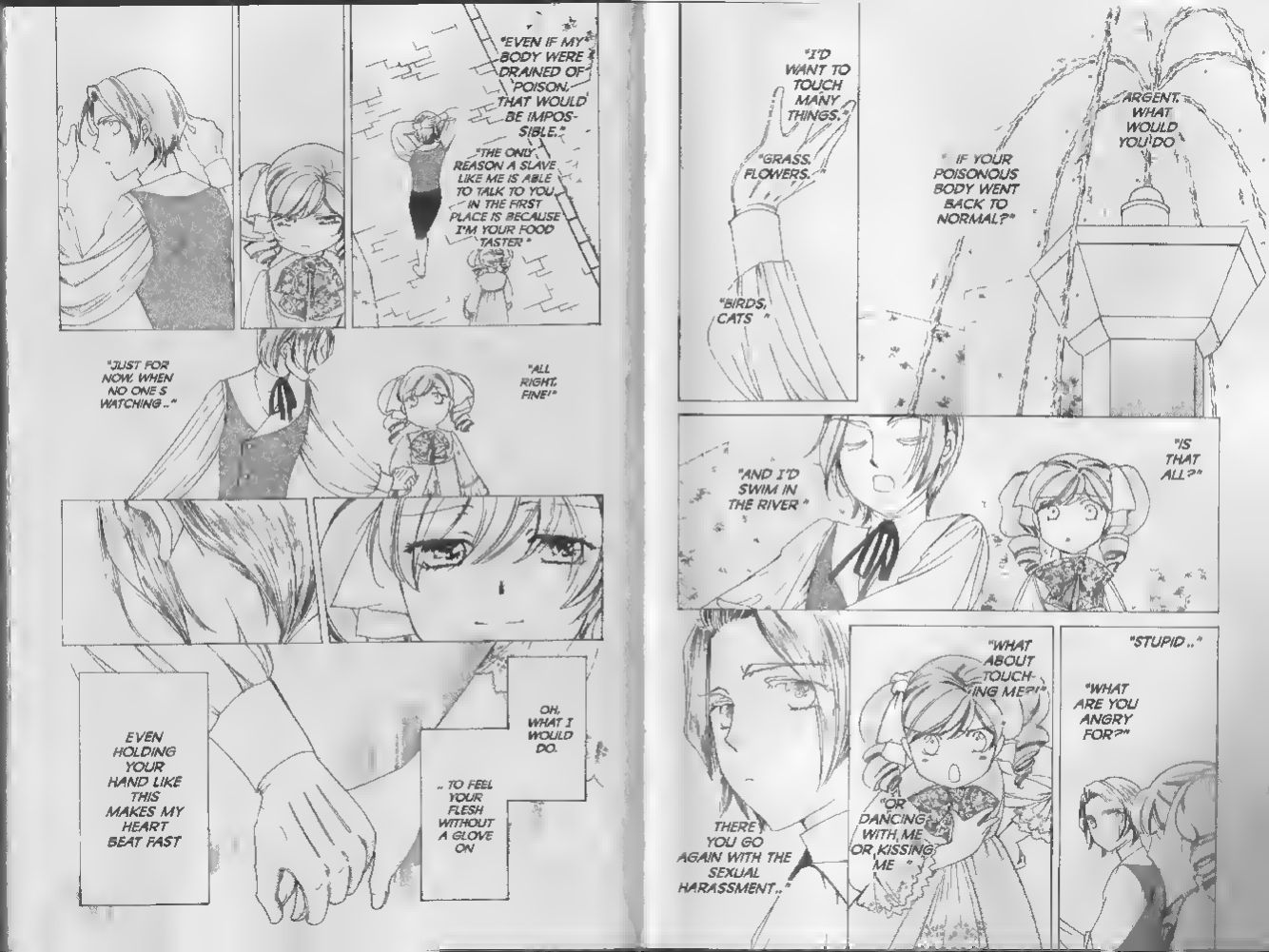

"EVEN IF MY BODY WERE DRAINED OF POISON, THAT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE."
"THE ONLY REASON A SLAVE LIKE ME IS ABLE TO TALK TO YOU IN THE FIRST PLACE IS BECAUSE I'M YOUR FOOD TASTER."
"JUST FOR NOW, WHEN NO ONE S WATCHING.."
"ALL RIGHT, FINE!"
EVEN HOLDING YOUR HAND LIKE THIS MAKES MY HEART BEAT FAST
.. TO FEEL YOUR FLESH WITHOUT A GLOVE ON
OH, WHAT I WOULD DO.
"I'D WANT TO TOUCH MANY THINGS."
"GRASS. FLOWERS."
"BIRDS, CATS "
" IF YOUR POISONOUS BODY WENT BACK TO NORMAL?"
ARGENT, WHAT WOULD YOU DO
"AND I'D SWIM IN THE RIVER "
"IS THAT ALL?"
THERE YOU GO AGAIN WITH THE SEXUAL HARASSMENT.."
"OR DANCING WITH ME OR KISSING ME "
"WHAT ABOUT TOUCHING ME?!"
"WHAT ARE YOU ANGRY FOR?"
"STUPID.."

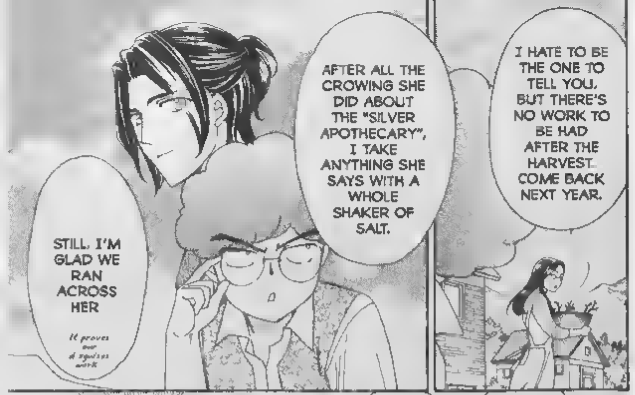
KNOCK IT OFF WITH THE JOKES!
You're always talking about kissing Soda.
TELL ME, WHY DOES IT HAVE TO BE THE PRINCESS...?
MY MASTER, ARGENT, IS AN APOTH-ECARY.
I TOLD YOU I LIKE GIRLS!
MORE RECENTLY ARGENT TRAVELED TO CASTORIA, IN SEARCH OF A WAY TO DETOXIFY HIS BODY
AND THERE, OBTAINED A DETOXIFYING STONE FROM LULU, A DOCTOR AND FORMER BASILISK HERSELF.
THEN, HE WAS BOUGHT BY THE KING OF BEAZOL TO BE THE PRINCESS'S FOOD TASTER AND YEARS LATER HE BECAME THE ROYAL APOTHECARY
...A HUMAN WITH AN ENTIRELY POISON-OUS BODY
...BUT AS A CHILD HE WAS FED POISONS THAT WOULD TURN HIM INTO A WEAPON...A TOOL TO ASSASSINATE ROYALTY. HE BECAME A "BASILISK"

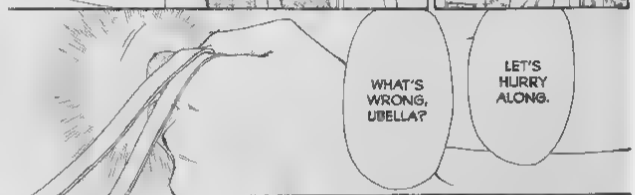
MASTER!!
MASTER
I'M STRAIGHT
HOW MANY TIMES DO I HAVE TO TELL YOU?
RATTLE
RATTLE
RATTLE
NEXT YOU SHOULD TEST IT OUT BY GIVING THE PRINCESS A KISS!
IT ISN'T PERFECT YET.
Sardine paste out or anything when you touched me
ANYWAY, IT'S GREAT THAT YOUR BODY'S DETOXIFICATION SEEMS TO BE GOING WELL

"THERE ARE TWO TYPES OF POISON POISON THAT IS EXCRETED SOON AFTER IT ENTERS A BODY AND POISON THAT ACCUMULATES IN THE BODY."
HUH
THE DETAILS ARE IN THE RESEARCH NOTES LULU GAVE ME
SO HOW DO YOU USE IT?
CRYSTALLIZATION NEAR THE LIVER IS THE MOST EFFECTIVE AREA FOR WHEN THE POISON OR MEDICINE METABOLIZES HOWEVER..."
AS THE CONCENTRATION OF THE SOLUTION STEADILY DECREASES SUPER SATURATION WILL CAUSE THE CRYSTAL TO BECOME BIGGER
A 'CORE OF SUPERIOR QUALITY' AND MAINTAINING THE BODY'S 'EQUILIBRIUM' ARE THE TWO REQUIREMENTS FOR THE PROCESS.
"REGARDING THE LATTER, THE ONLY WAY IT CAN BE REMOVED FROM THE BODY IS THROUGH SOME MEANS OF ABSORPTION
AND MAINTAINING A CERTAIN CONCENTRATION OF BODY FLUIDS AFTER THE ABSORPTION BEGINS!
IN OTHER WORDS THE KEYS ARE WHERE THE STONE OR CORE IS EMBEDDED
SO THIS IS THE DETOXIFYING STONE, EH?
HOW CAN I PUT IT...?
WHAT IS IT?
I DON'T THINK I'VE SEEN ITS LIKE BEFORE IT RESEMBLES A CLUMP OF VARIOUS TYPES OF CRYSTALS.
I SUPPOSE YOU COULD SAY THIS CRYSTAL IS THE FRUIT OF LULU'S MANY YEARS OF RESEARCH.
"THIS FRAGMENT IS ALL THAT REMAINS..."
"THE CHILD I GAVE BIRTH TO WAS A MASS OF POISON."

WHEN I THINK ABOUT THE PARADE THEY'LL HAVE UPON OUR TRIUMPHAL RETURN...
I CAN'T WAIT!
PLOP!
BEAZOL'S PEAR FIELDS.
IT'S A DISGUISE
ER MASTER WHAT'S THIS?
"WHETHER YOUR BODY RETURNS TO A NATURAL HUMAN STATE OR NOT I NEVER SET FOOT IN BEAZOL TERRITORY AGAIN."
"IF YOU'RE GOING TO LEAVE AGAINST MY WILL YOU'RE A TRAITOR"
I DIDN'T TELL YOU THIS SODA, BUT ACTUALLY, JUST AS I WAS ABOUT TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY...
BEING SEEN BY ANYONE CONNECTED TO THE CASTLE WOULD CAUSE A LOT OF PROBLEMS

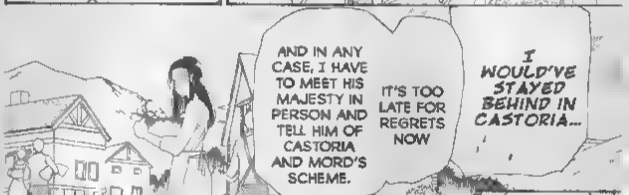
"USING THIS LUMP WHICH CRYSTALLIZED AND BECAME A STONE IN MY OWN BODY MAY WORK WELL FOR YOU AS A CURE."
ANES-THETIZE ME FIRST!
I JUST HOPE IT WORKS...
Um. The liver is the right place for here?
OKAY OKAY
SO LET'S NOT WASTE A MINUTE, SODA. HELP ME
"MY HYPOTHESIS IS THAT IT WOULD BE A CONSIDERABLE BURDEN ON YOUR BODY
SO WHETHER YOU ATTEMPT IT OR NOT IS UP TO YOU."
"BUT NO ONE HAS EVER TRIED IT BEFORE AND I CAN'T SAY TO WHAT EXTENT IT WILL DETOXIFY YOU."
AH!
LOOK WHERE WE ARE ALREADY, SODA.
FOR NOW
...I'M RELIEVED THAT THERE DOES SEEM TO BE A DETOXIFYING EFFECT


STILL, I'M GLAD WE RAN ACROSS HER
It proves our d ogged work
AFTER ALL THE CROWING SHE DID ABOUT THE "SILVER APOTHECARY", I TAKE ANYTHING SHE SAYS WITH A WHOLE SHAKER OF SALT.
I HATE TO BE THE ONE TO TELL YOU, BUT THERE'S NO WORK TO BE HAD AFTER THE HARVEST. COME BACK NEXT YEAR.


WHAT'S WRONG, UBELLA?
LET'S HURRY ALONG.

AH.
HUH...? MASTER, THAT VOICE COULD IT BE...?
SEASONAL LABORERS, I BELIEVE, BUT...
OH. WHO ARE THOSE TRAV-ELERS?
AFTER THE SEASON S OVER?

I WISH YOU WOULD'VE TOLD ME THAT BEFORE WE LEFT!
WHAAAT?!
RIGHT
And so are you, since you abandoned me
SO YOU'RE CONSID-ERED A TRAITOR, MASTER?

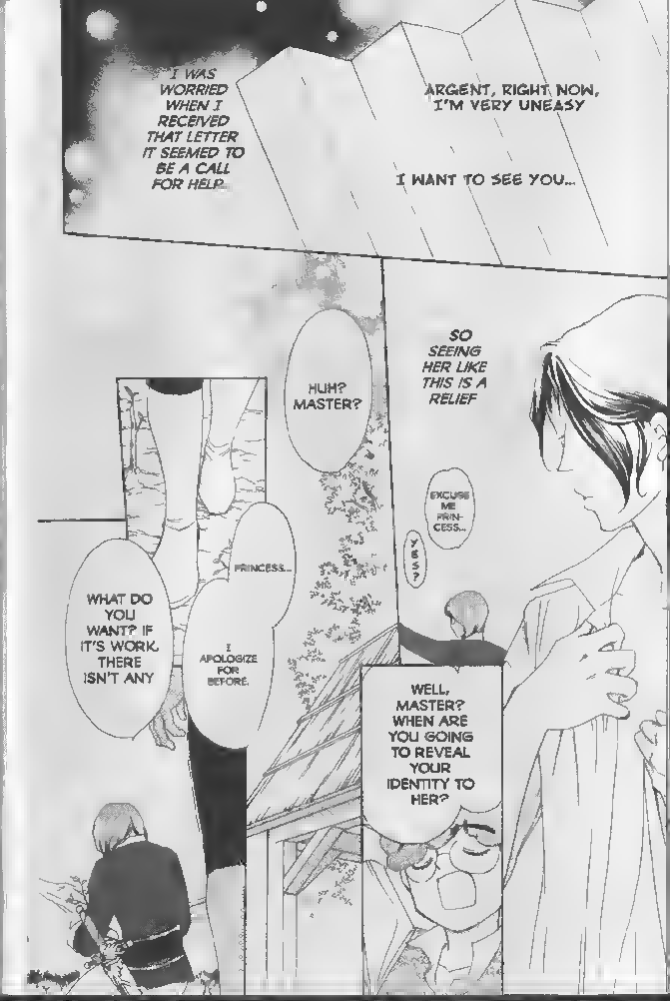

AND IN ANY CASE, I HAVE TO MEET HIS MAJESTY IN PERSON AND TELL HIM OF CASTORIA AND MORD'S SCHEME.
IT'S TOO LATE FOR REGRETS NOW
I WOULD'VE STAYED BEHIND IN CASTORIA...

UBELLA!
AH, NO, ACTUALLY..
EXCUSE ME, GENTLEMEN I DON'T BELIEVE I'VE SEEN YOU AROUND HERE BEFORE
ARE YOU SEASONAL LABORERS OR ?
17 YEARS AS A PEAR GROWER; SPECIAL SKILLS, KEEN OF HEARING, BLABBING

MASTER
YOU JUST TRAMPLED SEEDLINGS THAT WERE PLANTED YESTERDAY!!
WHAP!!
IT'S AN OUTRAGE!!
I DON'T BELIEVE THIS!!
SPLASH
SPLASH
WHAT THE DEVIL...?!
YOU KNOW, I NEVER PICTURED THE PRINCESS BEING IN A PLACE LIKE THIS
BUT STILL...!
IT'S BECAUSE SHE HAS A BAD MEMORY
UBELLA'S ONE THING, BUT I WAS SURE THE PRINCESS WOULD RECOGNIZE US!
THE PRINCESS SAYS THAT AS THE EVENTUAL RULER OF BEAZOL, SHE OUGHT TO SEE HOW HER PEOPLE LIVE
OH, RECENTLY, SHE'S BEEN TRAVELING ALL OVER THE COUNTRY TO OBSERVE

I WASN'T REALLY MENTALLY PREPARED TO SEE HER YET, BUT OH WELL..
COME DOWN FROM THE CARRIAGE AT ONCE!
YOU'RE JUST TOO SUSPICIOUS
PRINCESS, LONG TIME
AAAAAAAAH!
WHAT'S PRINCESS PRIMULA DOING HERE?!

CERTAINLY HERE
DO YOU KNOW HOW?
LET ME DO THAT
ALL RIGHT I LL EMPLOY YOU BUT ONLY DURING THE PLANTING SEASON
I'M THE TYPE OF PERSON WHO DOES THINGS FOR HERSELF AND I M TRYING TO LEARN ABOUT HOW THE PEOPLE LIVE
YOU SEE? AND YOU'RE VERY GOOD WITH YOUR HANDS AS WELL, PRINCESS I NEVER THOUGHT A MEMBER OF THE ROYAL FAMILY WOULD ENGAGE IN GARDENING


I WAS WORRIED WHEN I RECEIVED THAT LETTER IT SEEMED TO BE A CALL FOR HELP
ARGENT, RIGHT NOW, I'M VERY UNEASY
I WANT TO SEE YOU...
SO SEEING HER LIKE THIS IS A RELIEF
HUH? MASTER?
EXCUSE ME PRINCESS...
YES?
PRINCESS...
I APOLOGIZE FOR BEFORE.
WHAT DO YOU WANT? IF IT'S WORK, THERE ISN'T ANY
WELL, MASTER? WHEN ARE YOU GOING TO REVEAL YOUR IDENTITY TO HER?

OH, I GET IT!
IT JUST DIDN'T SEEM LIKE THE RIGHT TIME...
I thought maybe she doesn't have to know right away
AND WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL HER WHO YOU WERE?
SEE IF SHE'LL BE DRAWN TO YOU, EVEN IF YOU'RE IN ANOTHER GUISE!
YOU WANT TO TEST THE PRINCESS'S FEELINGS DON'T YOU?
...IF NOTHING'S CHANGED WHEN WE GET BACK HERE?!
I MEAN YOU WENT ALL THE WAY TO CASTORIA AND BECAME MORE OF A MAN BUT WHAT WAS THE POINT OF OUR ESCAPE OF BECOMING A SERVANT THERE...
YEESH! MASTER, YOU REALLY ARE A MASOCHIST!
MAYBE SO...
OR IF THAT'S TOO LONG, JUST CALL HIM "VEL"
AND OVER THERE IS BLACK VELVET
IT'S JADE...
I HAVEN'T CAUGHT YOUR NAME YET
BY THE WAY...
COME HERE, VEL! THE PRINCESS HAS GIVEN US A JOB!!
WHAT?!
MASTER
"JADE" I CAN UNDERSTAND ...BUT "VEL"? COME ON!

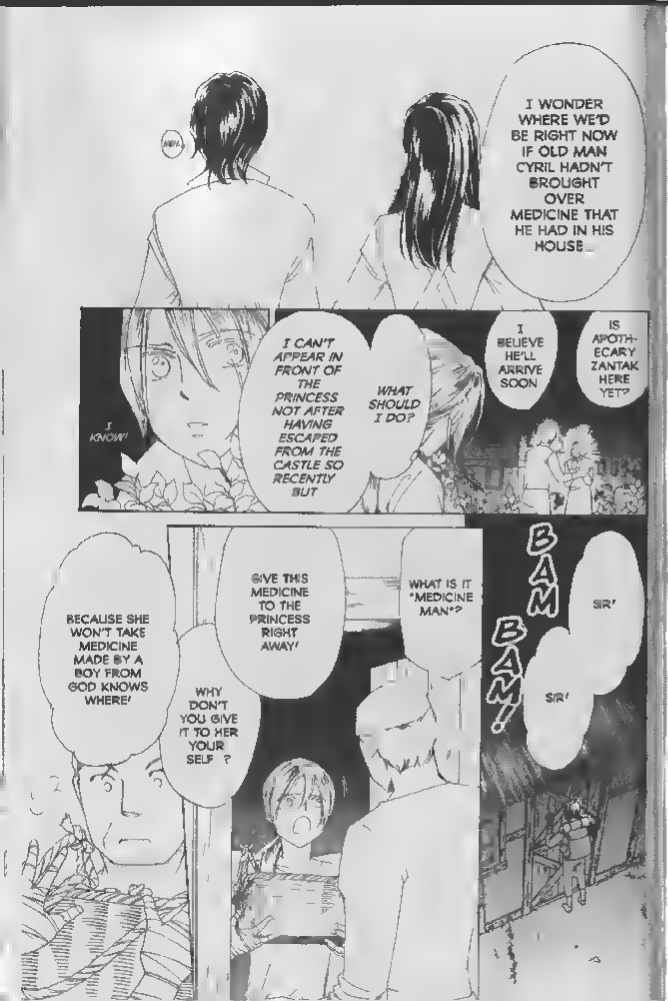
SO I'D FEEL A LOT MORE REASSURED IF I HAD MEDICINE AT HAND, JUST IN CASE SOMETHING HAPPENS.
HOWEVER, I MIGHT BE IN THE MARKET TO BUY SOME. I LIVE ALL ALONE OVER THERE.
DON'T TAKE IT PERSONALLY BOY. THE PEOPLE AROUND HERE CAN'T AFFORD TO BUY ANYTHING BUT THE ABSOLUTE ESSENTIALS.
I SEE. SO THAT OLD MAN...
MUST HAVE PASSED AWAY.

A RED BRICK CHIMNEY I KNOW THE ONE
THE CABIN HAS..
IF YOU FOLLOW THIS PATH YOU'LL FIND A CABIN THAT'S UNINHABITED FOR THE TIME BEING
YOU CAN LODGE THERE.
A LONG TIME AGO, WHEN I WAS PEDDLING MEDICINE
MASTER, HAVE YOU BEEN IN THIS AREA BEFORE?
THAT WAS AFTER THE PRINCESS HELPED ME ESCAPE FROM THE CASTLE.
I'M NOT OF A MIND TO BUY PHARMACEUTICALS WHEN I DON'T KNOW IF THEY'LL WORK OR NOT!
SLAM
TH-THERE ARE NO DOCTORS OR APOTHECARIES IN THIS AREA, SO I THOUGHT MAYBE PEOPLE WOULD WANT TO STOCK UP..
MEDICINE?

I'LL TELL YOU THEY WERE ALL EFFECTIVE
ESPECIALLY THE STOMACH MEDICINE
THE MONEY I OWE YOU FOR THE MEDICINE LAST TIME."
"HERE, BOY
NOT AT ALL, SIR I LOVE PEARS
HERE'S A LITTLE SOMETHING EXTRA. ONLY SOME LEFTOVER PEARS I'M AFRAID..
WELL, WELL. YOU'RE A PROFESSIONAL MEDICINE SALESMAN DESPITE YOUR AGE.
IN FACT, NOT ONLY ARE PEARS HEALTHY IN GENERAL, BUT THEY'RE A GOOD TREATMENT FOR HIGH FEVERS!
IN THAT CASE, I'LL JUST HAVE TO EXAMINE THE BRIDGE.
WE'RE SHORT ON MANPOWER. WORKERS WHO COULD DO A REPAIR JOB HAVE BEEN LURED TO NAVARA, SINCE THAT COUNTRY'S REVIVAL THEY CAN PAY BETTER.
And the bridge does still stand anyway
THAT'S BECAUSE THE BRIDGE CONNECTING THIS AREA TO THE LAND NEAR THE CASTLE IS DILAPIDATED NOW ALL TRAFFIC IS DETOURED FROM THE MAIN ROAD
IT LOOKS LIKE THE COST OF TRANSPORTATION HAS GONE UP SINCE THE LAST TIME I WAS HERE.
THEN WHY HASN'T THE BRIDGE BEEN FIXED?
AHEM ARE YOU ENCHANTED BY THE PRINCESS OR SOMETHING?
SHE STUFFED HERSELF SO MUCH, SHE GAVE HERSELF A STOMACH-ACHE
HMPH. YOU SHOULD'VE SEEN HER THE LAST TIME SHE WAS HERE FOR AN INSPECTION. ALL SHE DID WAS EAT.
I WAS JUST THINKING THAT FOR SOMEONE HER AGE SHE SEEMS TO HAVE A GOOD HEAD ON HER SHOULDERS.
MM? NEVER MIND.
OH, THAT'S RIGHT...
EVEN LOOKING AT HER NOW I'LL NEVER FORGET THAT DAY

OH!
PRINCESS I BELIEVE YOU'RE INDULGING A BIT TOO MUCH...
TRY SOME OF THIS AS WELL, PRINCESS
YES BUT LOOK AT THE WAY SHE EATS!
WHY SHE'S JUST A NORMAL GIRL I HEARD SHE WAS HUGE!
AAAHHMM
THAT PORKER IS INHALING ALL THE FOOD THAT WAS RESERVED FOR MY BIRTHDAY NEXT MONTH!
I DON'T KNOW WHAT THE FUSS IS ALL ABOUT!
WITHOUT EVEN A FOOD TASTER? HOW RECKLESS CAN SHE BE..?
SHE EATS LIKE A MAN THREE TIMES HER SIZE

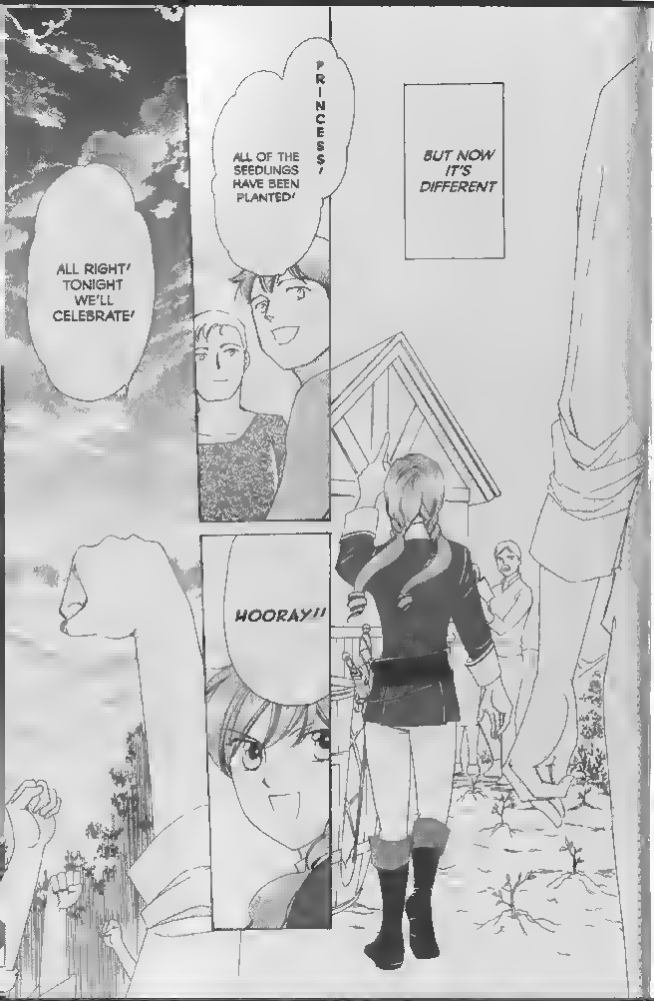
PRINCESS PRIMULA HAS COME FOR AN INSPECTION!
OH, I'M SURE THAT'S NOT TRUE-
I'M SORRY YOU SHOULDN'T TOUCH ME, SIR. MY BODY S DIRTY
PRINCESS PRIMULA IS HERE?
THEY SAY SHE'S IN THE FIELDS!
EH? WHERE IS SHE?

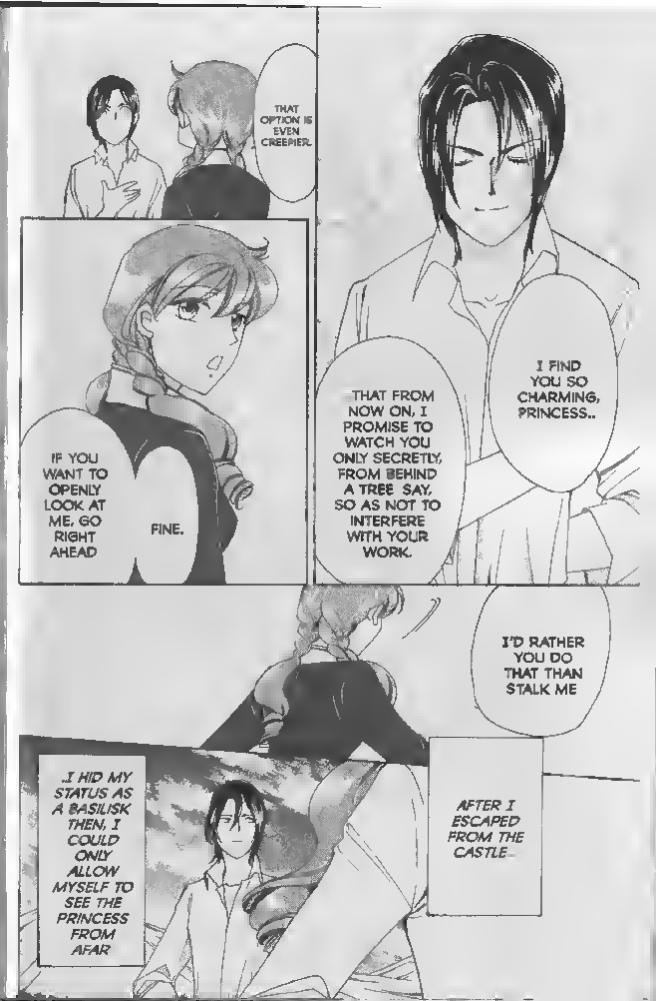

I WONDER WHERE WE'D BE RIGHT NOW IF OLD MAN CYRIL HADN'T BROUGHT OVER MEDICINE THAT HE HAD IN HIS HOUSE...
MM-
I KNOW!
I CAN'T APPEAR IN FRONT OF THE PRINCESS NOT AFTER HAVING ESCAPED FROM THE CASTLE SO RECENTLY BUT
WHAT SHOULD I DO?
I BELIEVE HE'LL ARRIVE SOON
IS APOTH-ECARY ZANTAK HERE YET?
BAM BAM!
SIR!
SIR!
WHAT IS IT "MEDICINE MAN"?
GIVE THIS MEDICINE TO THE PRINCESS RIGHT AWAY!
WHY DON'T YOU GIVE IT TO HER YOUR SELF ?
BECAUSE SHE WON'T TAKE MEDICINE MADE BY A BOY FROM GOD KNOWS WHERE!

CARLI ..MY STOMACH HURTS..
!
WHAT DID I TELL YOU?!?
THE PRINCESS GETS A BELLYACHE AND SUDDENLY, THE WHOLE TERRITORY IS IN A PANIC
CAN YOU IMAGINE IF SOMETHING HAD HAPPENED TO HER? OUR LAND WOULDN'T HAVE JUST BEEN SEIZED, OH, NO
EVERY LAST MAN, WOMAN AND CHILD IN THIS FIEF WOULD HAVE BEEN EXECUTED

YOU'D BETTER NOT BE SPREADING STRANGE RUMORS ABOUT ME AGAIN!
UBELLA!
SHE'S BEEN MAKING THE EFFORT TO COME TO US.
THAT'S WHY LATELY
UM... JUST TELLING OF YOUR HEROIC EXPLOITS A BIT MY LADY...
I HAVE TO GET BACK TO WORK!
OH, THAT'S RIGHT!
UBELLA!
I BEG YOUR FORGIVE-NESS.
YOU'VE BEEN BOTHERING ME EVER SINCE YESTERDAY WITH THAT WIDE-EYED STARE!
AND YOU, TOO

WHEN I HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO ACTUALLY MEET HER LATER
EVEN THOUGH THE PRINCESS DIDN'T MAKE A VERY GOOD FIRST IMPRES-SION .
QUICKLY, SIR! I BEG OF YOU!
SOME-THING LIKE THAT
YOU LEARNED SHE WAS A NICE GIRL?
AT LEAST TELL ME YOUR NAME, BOY...
BUT YOU KNOW, SHE'S THE PRINCESS. HOW OFTEN DOES ONE GET THE CHANCE TO GET CLOSE TO HER?
YOU CAN TELL IF YOU SEE HER UP CLOSE
WELL
.TO BE FAIR


ALL RIGHT! TONIGHT WE'LL CELEBRATE!
PRINCESS! ALL OF THE SEEDLINGS HAVE BEEN PLANTED!
BUT NOW IT'S DIFFERENT
HOORAY!!


THAT OPTION IS EVEN CREEPIER.
I FIND YOU SO CHARMING, PRINCESS..
THAT FROM NOW ON, I PROMISE TO WATCH YOU ONLY SECRETLY, FROM BEHIND A TREE SAY, SO AS NOT TO INTERFERE WITH YOUR WORK.
IF YOU WANT TO OPENLY LOOK AT ME, GO RIGHT AHEAD
FINE.
I'D RATHER YOU DO THAT THAN STALK ME
AFTER I ESCAPED FROM THE CASTLE...
I HID MY STATUS AS A BASILISK THEN, I COULD ONLY ALLOW MYSELF TO SEE THE PRINCESS FROM AFAR

GO AHEAD, VEL. YOU DRINK. IT'S A SPECIAL OCCASION.
WHAAAT ?!
YOU REFUSE TO DRINK MY LIQUOR?!
UM... BUT I'M A MINOR...
DRINK UP IF YOU KNOW WHAT'S GOOD FOR YOU!
PRINCESS ...

GIMME YOUR GLASSES!
JADE AND VEL, I HAVE TO ADMIT, YOU DID GOOD!
EVERYONE, THANK YOU FOR ALL YOUR HARD WORK! NO STANDING ON CEREMONY TONIGHT! I WANT EVERYONE TO DRINK THEIR FILL!
I'M SORRY. I'VE SWORN OFF ALCOHOL.
CHEERS!!

BUZZ BUZZ...

DO YOU KNOW HOW?
THAT'S RIGHT I'M DIFFERENT THAN BEFORE
OH, YES
COULD I HAVE THIS DANCE?
WE DIFFER IN SOCIAL STANDING
BUT I FACE THE PRINCESS HERE AS A MAN

THAT IS, IF WE EVER EVEN MEET AGAIN
AN ARGUMENT OUTSIDE ?
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU WENT OFF ON YOUR OWN AGAIN!

LIAR!
YOU DON'T KNOW HOW TO DANCE!
OOPS
OUCH!
I WAS THINKING I COULD DO ANYTHING I PUT MY MIND TO, BUT ,
I DIDN'T THINK YOU HAD THAT SIDE TO YOU YOU'D BETTER PRACTICE BEFORE YOU DANCE AGAIN WITH ME, SIR
WELL, WELL YOU'RE KIND OF RECKLESS, AREN'T YOU?

CLOP CLOP
MASTER—MASTER?
WAS THAT..?
HUH?
SLAM!
I'M GOING TO SEE IF THE PRINCESS IS ALL RIGHT!
MASTER—?
WHAT'S CARLI DOING HERE?!
SODA?
IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME APOTHECARY'S APPRENTICE
AHA. SO THAT'S WHAT THIS IS ABOUT

RECENTLY, YOU'VE BEEN GOING ON TOO MANY OF THESE INSPECTIONS AND ALL I CAN THINK IS THAT YOU'RE DOING IT TO GET OUT OF THE PALACE!
THAT'S NOT THE POINT
I LEFT NOTICE STATING EXACTLY WHERE I WAS GOING. BESIDES, I'M NOT SIGHTSEEING! THIS IS AN INSPECTION!
ANYWAY I'LL BE BACK BY TONIGHT
CARLI AND THE PRINCESS?
WAIT, WHAT? PRINCESS, WHERE ARE YOU GOING NOW?
TO EXAMINE A BRIDGE IN THIS TERRITORY
ALONE?
SODA!
SODA!!!
PRINCESS!
YES. AND PLEASE *LEAVE* ME ALONE!

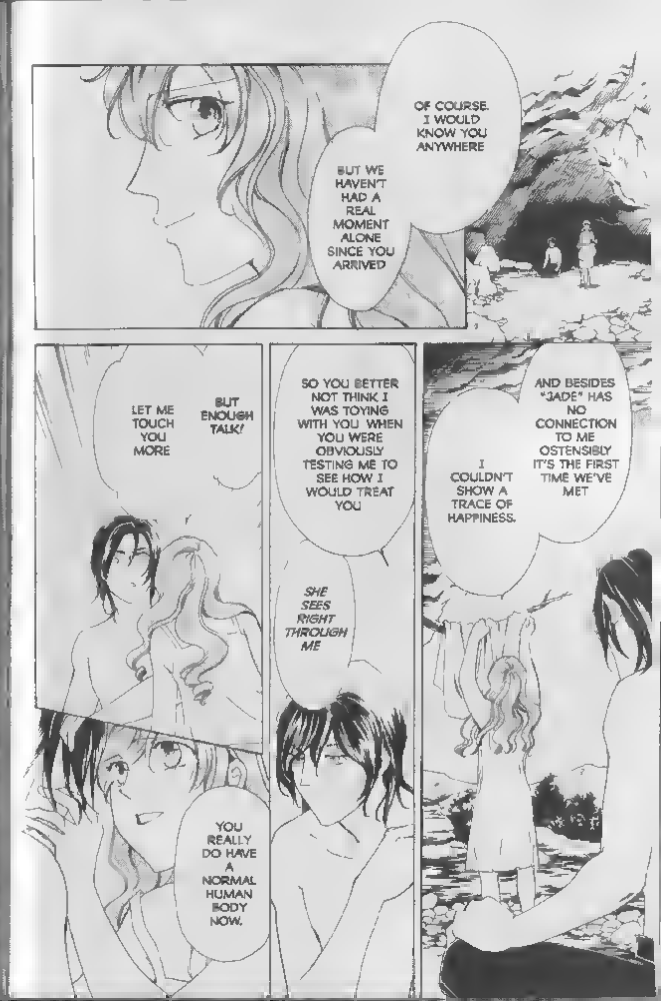
YOU DON'T GET IT
I TOLD YOU NOT TO COME UP AFTER ME BECAUSE
KRAK
SPLASHHH
...THE BRIDGE WON'T SUPPORT THE WEIGHT OF TWO PEOPLE!

PRINCESS! IT'S DANGEROUS UP THERE, COME DOWN!"
LOOK!
PRINCESS, STOP BEING SO STUB-BORN!
I'M FINE ON MY OWN! DON'T COME UP AFTER ME!
YOU DON'T HAVE TO GO THAT FAR-

YOU KNEW IT WAS ME THE WHOLE TIME DIDN'T YOU?
..ARGENT.
AND I WAS FINALLY ABLE TO CONFIRM IT...
YOU ACTUALLY DID IT YOU FOUND A WAY TO RID YOUR BODY OF POISON
PRIN-CESS--?

SPLISH
PRINCESS!
PRINCESS!
PRINCESS PRIMULA?!
MY BODY ISN'T COMPLETELY FREE OF TOXINS YET BUT I HAVE NO CHOICE.
"IT'S GREAT THAT YOUR BODY'S DETOXIFICATION SEEMS TO BE GOING WELL..."
"NEXT YOU SHOULD TEST IT OUT BY GIVING THE PRINCESS A KISS!"
KOFF
I'LL HAVE TO GIVE HER MOUTH-TO-MOUTH RESUSCITATION

THE PROCESS ISN'T COMPLETE YET.
PRINCESS, WAIT
WHAT?
TOUCHING ME MORE THAN THIS WOULD CONSTITUTE SEXUAL HARASSMENT!
Here I thought you'd learned a little while I was gone but you leave yourself as defenseless as ever!
IT MAY LOOK THAT WAY BUT I ASSURE YOU I'VE CHANGED
WELL TRUE YOU NEVER STARED AT ME SO BRAZENLY BEFORE OR ASKED ME TO DANCE. DESPITE HAVING TWO RIGHT FEET
YOU'VE COME A LONG WAY BUT STILL HAVE SO FAR TO GO.
AND YOU'RE AS SPINELESS AS EVER.


OF COURSE. I WOULD KNOW YOU ANYWHERE
BUT WE HAVEN'T HAD A REAL MOMENT ALONE SINCE YOU ARRIVED
AND BESIDES "JADE" HAS NO CONNECTION TO ME OSTENSIBLY IT'S THE FIRST TIME WE'VE MET
I COULDN'T SHOW A TRACE OF HAPPINESS.
SO YOU BETTER NOT THINK I WAS TOYING WITH YOU WHEN YOU WERE OBVIOUSLY TESTING ME TO SEE HOW I WOULD TREAT YOU
SHE SEES RIGHT THROUGH ME
LET ME TOUCH YOU MORE
BUT ENOUGH TALK!
YOU REALLY DO HAVE A NORMAL HUMAN BODY NOW.

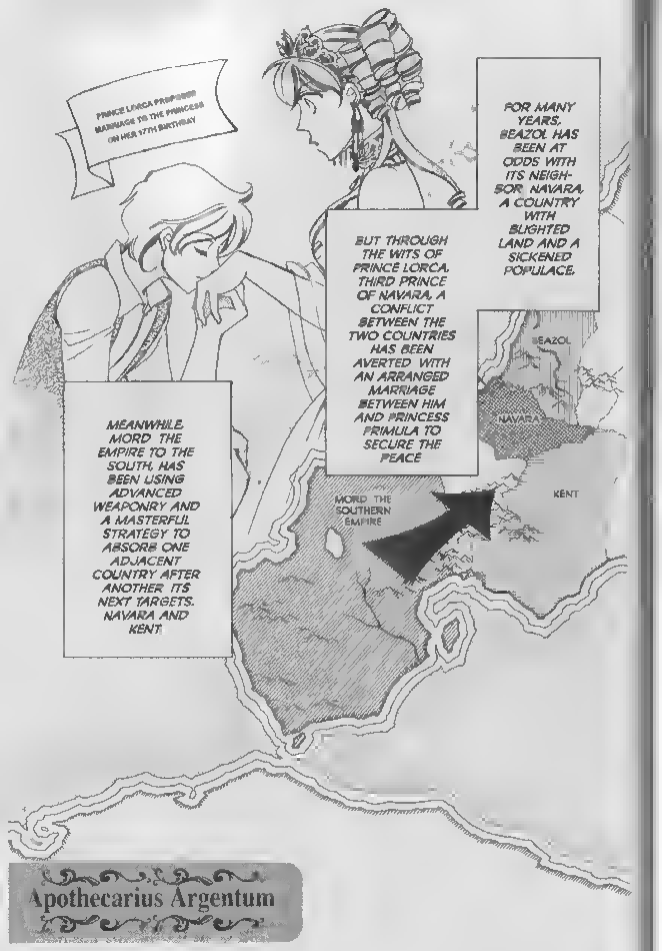
PRIN-CESS...
MAYBE YOU ATE TOO MANY PEARS?
I'VE GOT A PAIN IN MY RIGHT SIDE.
WHAT'S WRONG?
COULD THIS PAIN ?
...SO WHETHER YOU ATTEMPT IT OR NOT IS UP TO YOU."
"MY HYPOTHESIS IS THAT IT WOULD BE A CONSID-ERABLE BURDEN ON YOUR BODY
"BUT NO ONE HAS EVER TRIED IT BEFORE AND I CAN'T SAY TO WHAT EXTENT IT WILL DETOXIFY YOU."
THERE'S SOMETHING I'VE BEEN MEANING TO GIVE YOU
A souvenir from Castor.
PRIN-CESS PRIMU-LA!
OH, THAT'S RIGHT. I ALMOST FORGOT.
I'M FINE
ARE YOU REALLY ALL RIGHT? YOU DIDN'T HIT A ROCK OR SOMETHING WHEN WE FELL. ?

NOW YOU CAN ADD ME KISSING YOU TO THE LIST.
OW!
WAIT ! ARGENT
I THINK IT'S MY TURN TO TOUCH YOU, PRINCESS.

LET'S RETURN TO THE CASTLE WITH ALL DUE SPEED
WELL, PRINCESS PRIMULA, I THINK YOU'VE HAD ENOUGH OF A "BREATHER."
MASTER.. HE FOUND US OUT
PRINCE LORCA OF NAVARA HAS ALREADY ARRIVED
IN PREPARATION FOR YOUR WEDDING, TWO WEEKS HENCE
MORD: THE LARGE NATION TO THE SOUTH
I SEE—
SO IT'S OFFICIAL NOW THE PRINCESS OF BEAZOL IS TO WED THE PRINCE OF NAVARA.
AND SOMEDAY, WHEN THEY PRODUCE HEIRS, THE TWO COUNTRIES WILL BECOME ONE
INDISPUTABLY CREATING AN EVEN BIGGER THREAT THAN THEY POSE NOW
ER—
CARU!
IS THAT RIGHT?
WHILE I WAS EXAMINING THE BRIDGE, THE BOTTOM FELL OUT AND HE SAVED ME FROM DROWNING.
EH?!
LONG TIME NO SEE
YOU ALWAYS SEEM TO BE AROUND TO SAVE HER WHEN SHE'S IN DANGER. APOTHECARY ARGENT THANK YOU

THE KINGDOM OF BEAZOL
WELCOME HOME, PRINCESS PRIMULA!
SO YOU'RE FINALLY GOING TO GET MARRIED TO PRINCE LORCA OF NAVARA!
HURRAY FOR BOTH COUNTRIES! HURRAY FOR BEAZOL!!
IS THE PRINCESS REALLY GOING TO GET MARRIED?
IT'S LIKE THE INNKEEPER FROM CASTORIA SAID
CIRCUM-STANCES MUST HAVE CHANGED SIGNIFICANTLY SINCE THEN

BEAZOL BECAME A MENACE TO US THE DAY THEY TOOK THE COUNTRY OF KENT UNDER THEIR UMBRELLA.
WE MUST STRIKE AT THEM SOME-HOW
FOR THE BASILISK, A BASILISK
AND FOR THE PRINCESS BEAZOL'S FORMER PRINCE
IT IS ALREADY BEING DONE.


PRINCE LORCA PROPOSED MARRIAGE TO THE PRINCESS ON HER 17TH BIRTHDAY
FOR MANY YEARS, BEAZOL HAS BEEN AT ODDS WITH ITS NEIGHBOR, NAVARA, A COUNTRY WITH BLIGHTED LAND AND A SICKENED POPULACE.
BUT THROUGH THE WITS OF PRINCE LORCA, THIRD PRINCE OF NAVARA, A CONFLICT BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES HAS BEEN AVERTED WITH AN ARRANGED MARRIAGE BETWEEN HIM AND PRINCESS PRIMULA TO SECURE THE PEACE.
MEANWHILE, MORD THE EMPIRE TO THE SOUTH, HAS BEEN USING ADVANCED WEAPONRY AND A MASTERFUL STRATEGY TO ABSORB ONE ADJACENT COUNTRY AFTER ANOTHER. IT'S NEXT TARGETS, NAVARA AND KENT.
BEAZOL
NAVARA
KENT
MORD THE SOUTHERN EMPIRE

PRINCESS PRIMULA.
THE KING OF BEAZOL
THOUGH THE KINGDOM OF BEAZOL IS A SMALL COUNTRY IN ONE CORNER OF A CONTINENT, IT'S BLESSED WITH FERTILE LAND
MOREOVER, UNDER THE COMMAND OF ITS SUPERIOR KING, THE NATION HAS PROSPERED.
IF THAT HAPPENS I WONDER WHAT'LL BECOME OF US?
"SOMETHING SMELLS FISHY."
IT'S NOT JUST NAVARA NOW EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT HOW KENT IS SUPPOSEDLY UNDER BEAZOL'S UMBRELLA."
"AT THIS RATE, I WAGER MORD WILL STAGE A FULL-ON ATTACK, SOONER OR LATER."

ARGENT, HIS MAJESTY HAS SENT FOR YOU
I KNEW IT WAS COMING! M-MASTER! WE'RE GOING TO BE BEHEADED!
DON'T WORRY
DESPITE WHAT FATHER MAY HAVE SAID HE KNOWS ARGENT IS AN EXCELLENT APOTHECARY
HE WOULDN'T EXECUTE OR BANISH HIM AS SIMPLY AS THAT
ALTHOUGH I CAN'T GUARANTEE THE SAME TREATMENT FOR HIS APPRENTICE
AIEEEEE!!
I'M JOKING YOU FOOL.
I'LL SEE YOU AFTER-WARDS THEN SODA.

BEAZOL CASTLE.
PRINCESS PRIMULA, WELCOME BACK!
I'M SORRY FOR MAKING YOU WAIT, LORCA.
NOT AT ALL! I'M THE ONE THAT'S SORRY, ADVANCING PLANS WITHOUT GIVING ANY THOUGHT TO YOUR OWN CIRCUM-STANCES
TAK
ARGENT SO YOU'RE BACK FROM CASTORIA.
IT'S BEEN A WHILE, PRINCE LORCA.
CONGRATULA-TIONS ON YOUR UPCOMING NUPTIALS

THE THRONE ROOM.
HE WAS FATHER! HIS BODY IS FINALLY DEVOID OF POISON HE S A NORMAL HUMAN BEING NOW!
YOUR APPEARANCE INDICATES THAT YOU WERE SUCCESSFUL IN CASTORIA.
I BEG YOUR FORGIVENESS, SIRE--FOR ABANDONING MY POSITION AS THE ROYAL APOTHECARY
--AND LEAVING THE COUNTRY WITHOUT PERMISSION
IT'S BEEN A WHILE, ARGENT
BETWEEN THIS AND THE WEDDING BETWEEN MY DAUGHTER AND LORCA, BEAZOL SEEMS BLESSED LATELY. IT PLEASES ME
CONGRATULA-TIONS ARGENT

HEY, RUNT! MUTTERING TO YOURSELF COULD GET YOU ARRESTED
ONLY A COUPLE OF WEEKS BEFORE AN AUSPICIOUS OCCASION, YET EVERYONE SEEMS TENSE.
SOMETHING ODD HERE.
I'LL GO WITH YOU

YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED A BIT HAVE YOU.--
PLEASE GUIDE ME ON THE CORRECT PATH, SIR!!
FROM NOW ON, AS A CITIZEN OF THIS COUNTRY, I SWEAR TO BE EVEN MORE LOYAL!
ULP! I'M SORRY!

AH! GARNA!!
APOTHECARY'S APPRENTICE SODA?!

AH, WELL AT LEAST HE AND THE PRINCESS CAN GO BACK TO THE WAY THEY WERE
HUH... SO IN THE END, MY MASTER'S LOVE ISN'T DESTINED TO BEAR FRUIT
I CAN'T IMAGINE THINGS GOING BACK TO THE OLD STATUS QUO SO EASILY...
I HAD NO IDEA IT WAS MEANT TO BE "UNDER THE TABLE"
RUMORS OF THAT AGREEMENT HAD ALREADY REACHED BEAZOL
HOWEVER, I BELIEVE THAT SECRET AGREEMENT BECAME NULL AND VOID AFTER CASTORIA'S TOP LEADER WAS OVERTHROWN RECENTLY.
CASTORIA WAS RUNNING THE BASE COMPONENTS OF WEAPONS TO MORD N EXCHANGE FOR A NON-AGGRESSION PACT. SO THEY COULD KEEP THEIR OWN SOVEREIGNTY
I SEE.

...I WOULD LIKE TO SHARE INFORMATION I OBTAINED IN CASTORIA ABOUT OTHER COUNTRIES SIRE...
BUT IN PLACE OF THAT...
HAVING JUST HEARD THE NEWS MYSELF I HAVEN'T HAD TIME TO PREPARE A WEDDING GIFT...
ABOUT THAT I APOLOGIZE
I MEAN, THE KING OF KENT'S SUDDEN DEATH, THE ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT OF OUR OWN KING... BOTH EVENTS SEEM TO HAVE BEEN ENGINEERED BY MORD
IT DOESN'T COME AS A SURPRISE, AFTER EVERYTHING THAT'S HAPPENED.
THE FULFILLMENT OF THE TWO-YEAR-LONG PROMISE OF MARRIAGE HIS MAJESTY MADE TO LORCA IS PART OF THAT
THAT'S WHY, BEFORE THAT HAPPENS BEAZOL SHOULD STRENGTHEN ITS TIES WITH THE OTHER COUNTRIES IN THE AREA.
WHO KNOWS? ALTHOUGH THERE'S NO DOUBT THAT SOONER OR LATER, THE SITUATION WILL COME TO A HEAD
WILL WE GO TO WAR AGAINST THEM?

ANYWAY..
I APPRECIATE THE INFORMATION.
NOTHING TO DO WITH YOU.
THAT WOMAN?
AS TO YOUR PUNISHMENT I SHALL DECIDE ON THAT LATER
FOR NOW, STAY IN THE PALACE
I'M JUST CONFINED TO THE PALACE FOR THE TIME BEING I DON'T KNOW WHAT OTHER PUNISHMENT AWAITS ME BUT
WHEW! SO FAR, I'VE AVOIDED THE ULTIMATE PUNISH-MENT.
KACHA
CARU- KEEP HIM UNDER SURVEIL-LANCE
EXCUSE ME

MAYBE THEY MOVED THEIR BASE OF OPERATIONS TO THE SOUTH BECAUSE THEY WERE AFRAID OF WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IN CASTORIA IF THERE WAS A REVOLT AGAINST BASILISK HUNTING
THERE IN MORD, THEY SOMEHOW DEVELOPED ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY AND INCREASED THEIR NATIONAL STRENGTH.
IF PROMINENT FAMILIES POSSESSING THEIR PARTICULAR IDEOLOGY WERE TO SPREAD .
I ALSO CONFIRMED THAT THEY'RE THE REMNANTS OF THE CADUCEUS, THE ONES WHO RAISED US BASILISKS
IN OTHER WORDS..
..THAT WOMAN SPOKE THE TRUTH

YES, OF COURSE
PERHAPS IF I MENTION MY SON'S NAME, NEON, YOU'LL REMEMBER?
THE LAST TIME WAS IN HIS MAJESTY'S TERRITORY ON THE BORDER LAND
I HEARD ALL THE MEMBERS OF YOUR HOUSEHOLD WERE IMPRISONED AFTER THAT
HOWEVER, I DIDN'T KNOW THAT HIS LORDSHIP AND NEON HAD PASSED AWAY. I'M SORRY
BUT NAVARA WAS AN ENEMY NATION AT THE TIME JOINING FORCES WITH THEM WAS AN ACT OF TREASON
THERE WAS NOTHING FOR IT MY HUSBAND DID WHAT HE DID SO THAT HIS SON'S DISEASE WOULD BE CURED
IT HAPPENED SOON AFTER WE WERE INCARCERATED MY HUSBAND AND NEON BOTH CAUGHT A DISEASE THAT WAS GOING AROUND
THAT'S ONE PART OF YOU THAT'S NEVER CHANGED, PRINCESS.
WHAT? I'M SURE EVERYONE IS ANXIOUS TO SEE YOU
I'll make you forget your concerns!
FIRST, LET'S HAVE A WELCOME BACK PARTY FOR YOU!
WELL, WHAT WILL BE, WILL BE
ER HAVE WE MET BEFORE?
IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME, SIR
OH, MY! WITH THE COLOR OF YOUR HAIR CHANGED I DIDN'T KNOW WHO YOU WERE!
APOTHECARY ARGENT?
ELISA! PREPARE A CHANGE OF CLOTHES FOR APOTHECARY ARGENT
AH BUT BEFORE THAT WE'D BETTER DO SOMETHING ABOUT YOUR APPEARANCE.

RIGHT AWAY
GARNA, PREPARE A FEAST
SOMEWHERE ALONG THE LINE SHE'S BECOME AN ADULT
I HEARD YOU'D GONE TO ANOTHER COUNTRY TO STUDY BUT I NEVER WOULD HAVE RECOGNIZED YOU LIKE THIS!
ARE YOU REALLY THE "SILVER APOTH-ECARY"?
AND SO, WE'RE CELEBRATING THE RETURN OF THE FORMER ROYAL APOTHECARY, ARGENT
CHEERS!
CAN'T YOU TELL JUST BY LOOKING AT ME?
NO
I CAN
WHAT?! I'VE CHANGED DRAMATI-CALLY!
MMM MAYBE HE HAS GROWN AN INCH...
WELL, YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED A BIT-
CHEERS!

BUT DURING THE TIME OF THE LAST HARVEST FESTIVAL, MY LADY HAD ME PARDONED
EVEN OUR BLOOD RELATIVES WERE EXECUTED
HIS MAJESTY IS UNSPARING WHEN IT COMES TO TRAITORS PARTICULARLY THOSE WHO PLOT AGAINST THE ROYAL FAMILY
"THE WORLD OUTSIDE HAS CHANGED"
"I WANT YOU TO WALK ON A NEW PATH, TOO. I WANT YOU TO LIVE"
"FROM TODAY THERE ARE NO MORE ILL FEELINGS TOWARDS NAVARA"
AT ANY RATE THE PRINCESS HAS SURPRISED ME
I SEE
-WHILE WORKING HERE AS A MAID
AND SO FOR THE REMAINDER OF MY LIFE I'VE DECIDED TO STRIVE TO RESTORE MY DECEASED HUSBAND'S HONOR-

PRINCE LORCA.
I APOLOGIZE FOR BEING LATE. MY MEETING RAN LONG.
I HEARD FROM THE PRINCESS—
...THAT YOUR DYED GOODS INDUSTRY IS A GREAT SUCCESS IN REVIVING YOUR COUNTRY'S ECONOMY. CONGRATULATIONS.
IT WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN IF WE HADN'T BEEN ABLE TO USE KENT'S PORT, THE BIGGEST HARBOR THIS SIDE OF THE CONTINENT.
THE SUCCESS DOESN'T HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH MY ABILITY.
WHERE IS PRINCE DANIEL NOW?
OFF ON ANOTHER TRIP.
SPREADING THE LOVE?
MAYBE— BUT HIS AIM THIS TIME—
HE'S LOOKING FOR HER, ISN'T HE? CORDA.
CORDA— THE BASILISK WOMAN YOU WROTE ME ABOUT?

HE GOT A GIRLFRIEND.
WHAT?! SERIOUSLY?!
HAHAHA! IS IT THAT OBVIOUS? THEN I MIGHT AS WELL CONFESS!
THAT DUMB GRIN REMINDS ME OF THE OLD MAN NEXT DOOR. WHO ONLY RECENTLY FELL IN LOVE FOR THE FIRST TIME IN HIS LIFE.

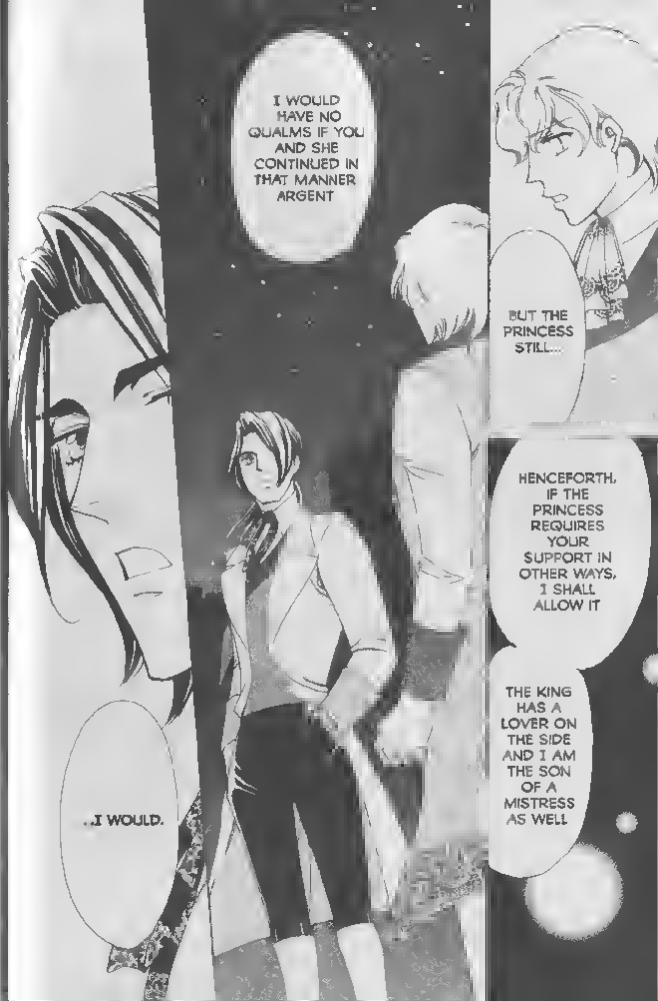
SO? WHERE IS SHE NOW?
I LEFT HER BEHIND
UPON OUR PARTING, SHE WAS IN TEARS. "DON'T GO!" SHE CRIED. "I CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT YOU!"
I TOLD HER, "I'VE STILL GOT A MISSION TO CARRY OUT IN BEAZOL. BUT I'LL BE BACK FOR YOU IN A FEW YEARS MAYBE."

HUH...EVEN YOU HAVE YOUR MOMENTS...
...IS THAT THE TRUTH?
MMM... I'D SAY ABOUT HALF OF IT...
ARGENT.

ARGENT COULD I TALK TO YOU FOR A FEW MINUTES?
HE WASN'T ASKING YOU ANYWAY!
I'M SORRY! I'M SORRY!
THAT'S ENOUGH OUT OF YOU, GARNA!!
I FEEL BADLY.
YOU FINALLY DRAIN YOUR BODY OF ITS POISONS... AND COME HOME TO THIS SITUATION.
OH, THAT'S ALL RIGHT
THIS WAS THE PLAN ANYWAY AND EVEN WITHOUT A TOXIC BODY, I CAN'T OVERCOME THE BARRIER OF SOCIAL POSITION THAT DIVIDES US
LORCA, YOU WILL BECOME THE PRINCESS'S LIFE PARTNER.
AND I WILL SUPPORT HER AND THIS COUNTRY THROUGH MY WORK AS AN APOTHECARY
SO IT WAS DECIDED, FROM THE VERY BEGINNING

AFTER SHE FAILED TO ASSASSINATE MY FATHER, SHE WAS INTERROGATED BY PRINCE DANIEL OVER A PERIOD OF DAYS.
...AND PERHAPS HIS DEVOTION MELTED HER HEART FOR SHE GAVE US SOME INFORMATION ON OUR ENEMIES BEFORE COMMITTING SUICIDE OR AT LEAST WE THOUGHT SHE DID BUT HER BODY WASN'T FOUND
I BELIEVE HER COMRADES TOOK HER BACK TO THEIR COUNTRY
HMM
BECAUSE THE PRINCESS IS JEALOUS, ARGENT
SHE'S WONDERING IF THE BASILISK WOMAN WOULDN'T BE A BETTER MATCH FOR YOU THAN SHE HERSELF
I WOULDN'T HAVE MINDED WHY DO YOU ASK?
BEING A BASILISK YOURSELF, DID YOU WANT TO MEET HER?

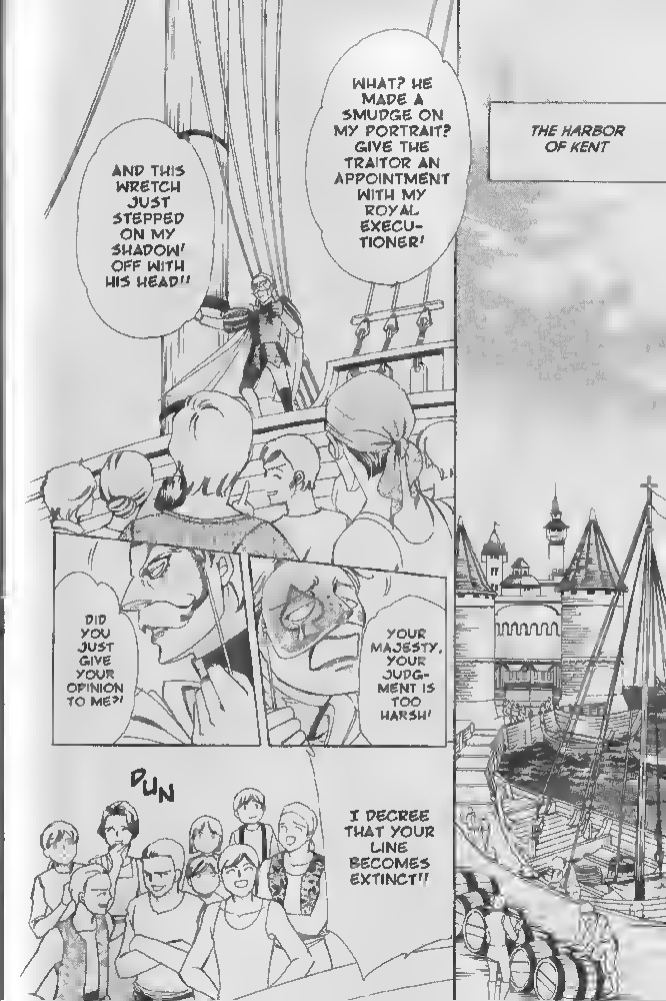
HOW COULD YOU NOT TRUST HER?
SHE HAS ALREADY ACCEPTED YOU AS A PARTNER
EVEN WITH YOUR BLESSING, LORCA, I WOULDN'T TAKE PART IN SUCH A RELATIONSHIP
NOR WOULD THE PRINCESS DO ANYTHING TO HURT OR FOOL A PERSON WHO IS DEAR TO HER.
SHE JUST HASN'T SORTED EVERYTHING OUT IN HER MIND YET
THE PRINCESS WILL BE FINE.
I NEED TO BE A LITTLE MORE PATIENT.
YOU'RE RIGHT.

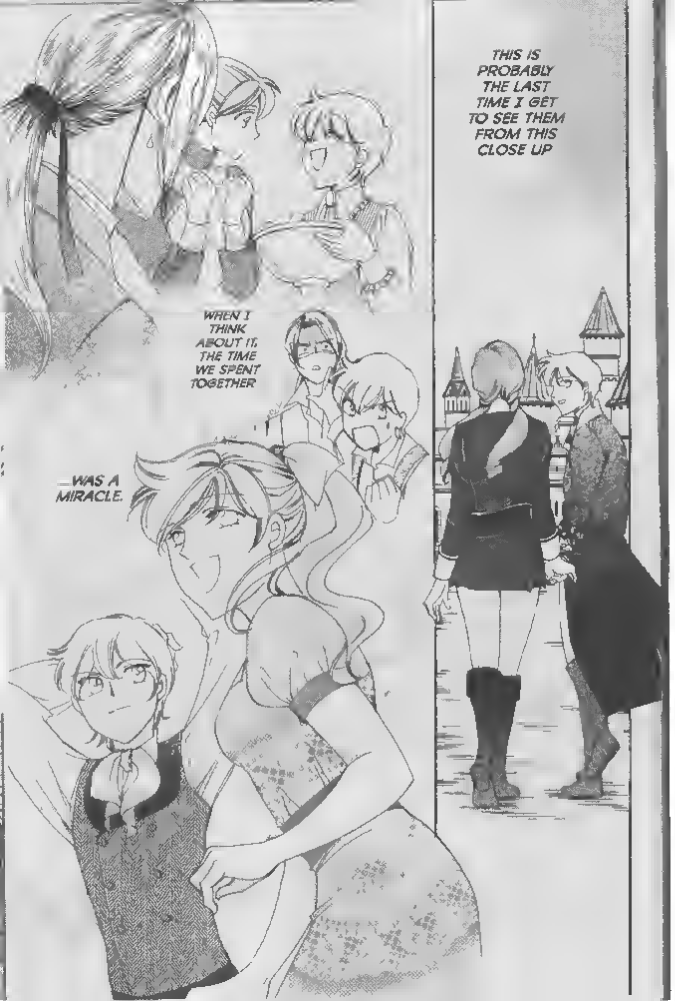

I WOULD HAVE NO QUALMS IF YOU AND SHE CONTINUED IN THAT MANNER ARGENT
..I WOULD.
BUT THE PRINCESS STILL...
HENCEFORTH, IF THE PRINCESS REQUIRES YOUR SUPPORT IN OTHER WAYS, I SHALL ALLOW IT
THE KING HAS A LOVER ON THE SIDE AND I AM THE SON OF A MISTRESS AS WELL

PRIN-CESS!
DO YOU BELIEVE ME TO BE SO UNTRUST-WORTHY?
WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME ABOUT SOMETHING THIS IMPORTANT?
FIRST THING TOMORROW, THE THREE OF US WILL TRAVEL TO THE SITE FOR AN INSPECTION!

IT'S NOT THE DISEASE THAT SPREAD THROUGH NAVARA BEFORE?
...DIED OF AN UNKNOWN MALADY
RECENTLY, SEVERAL FOREIGNERS WHO CAME TO THE PORT OF KENT BY SHIP
WHAT IS IT?
THERE WAS ANOTHER THING I WANTED TO CONSULT WITH YOU ABOUT
ACTUALLY ARGENT...
THE FIRST SYMPTOM IS A HIGH FEVER, FOLLOWED BY BUMPS ALL OVER THE SKIN, AND THEN A RAPID DEATH
NO, THIS IS COM-PLETELY DIFFERENT!
EXCUSE ME, YOU TWO!
...BUT I WOULD LIKE TO BE PREPARED WITH COUN-TERMEASURES OR TREAT MENT IN CASE ANOTHER OUTBREAK OCCURS
THAT'S WHY THE NUMBER OF VICTIMS HASN'T SPREAD...
OF COURSE.
PERHAPS IT'S AN EPIDEMIC WERE THE CORPSES BURNED RIGHT AWAY?

WHICH MEANS THE ROYAL FAMILY IS HERE?
MY MY! THAT GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL IS FROM NAVARA.
CLOP
CLOP
CLOP
WHAT ARE YOU DOING THERE?! DISPERSE AT ONCE!
LIKE HERE THEY CRITICIZE THE ROYAL FAMILY
RECENTLY THERE HAVE BEEN A LOT OF IMPROMPTU PERFORMANCES IN THIS AREA.
LORCA, WHAT'S THAT ABOUT?
FOOSH
I HOPE TO SEE YOU ALL AGAIN!
AS THE REAL PRINCE IS PUTTING IN AN APPEARANCE, I, YOUR FAKE PRINCE SHALL TAKE MY LEAVE
SO ITS CITIZENS HAVE A DEEP SEATED ANIMOSITY
KENT WAS BROUGHT UNDER BEAZOL'S BANNER AGAINST ITS WILL


THE HARBOR OF KENT
AND THIS WRETCH JUST STEPPED ON MY SHADOW! OFF WITH HIS HEAD!!
WHAT? HE MADE A SMUDGE ON MY PORTRAIT? GIVE THE TRAITOR AN APPOINTMENT WITH MY ROYAL EXECUTIONER!
DID YOU JUST GIVE YOUR OPINION TO ME?!
YOUR MAJESTY, YOUR JUDGMENT IS TOO HARSH!
DUN
I DECREE THAT YOUR LINE BECOMES EXTINCT!!

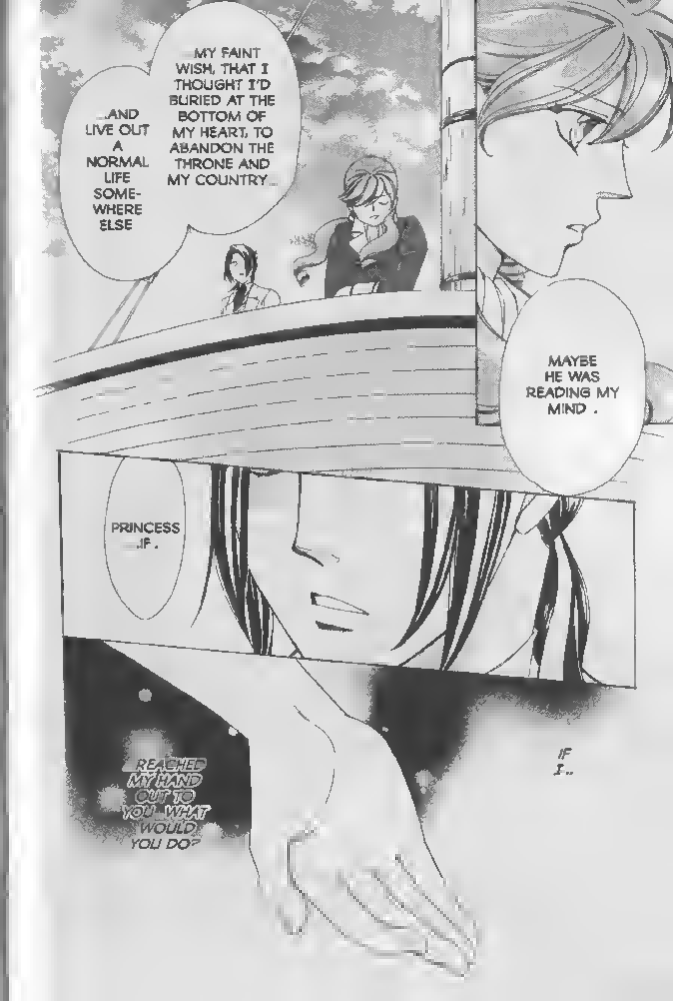

THIS IS PROBABLY THE LAST TIME I GET TO SEE THEM FROM THIS CLOSE UP
WHEN I THINK ABOUT IT, THE TIME WE SPENT TOGETHER
—WAS A MIRACLE.

PRINCESS PRIMULA AND PRINCE LORCA. THIS WAY, PLEASE
WELL, WELL
IT'S ALL RIGHT NOW PRINCESS WE CAN GET OUT
I-I BEG YOUR PARDON!
HE'S JUST AN APOTHECARY *THIS* IS PRINCE LORCA.
"JUST AN APOTH-ECARY", EH...?
THEN, IF YOU'LL FOLLOW ME—
I'LL EXAMINE THE SHIP PRINCESS, WHY DON'T YOU AND THE PRINCE TOUR THE HARBOR?

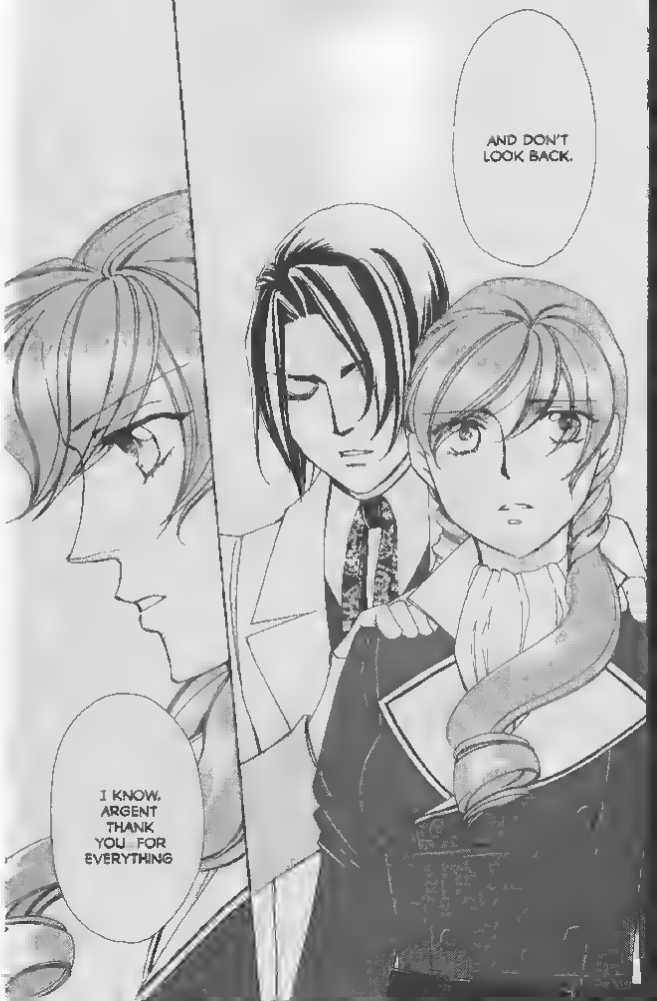
WHERE IS THAT COMING FROM? I'M STILL A PRINCESS
THERE MUST BE DISTANCE BETWEEN MYSELF AND YOU AND THE PRINCE
AND I'M AN APOTHECARY WHO HAS NO BUSINESS IN THE THRONE ROOM
THE THRONE IS RIGHT IN FRONT OF YOU, YOUR HIGHNESS
I SHOULD'VE GONE WITH HIM THEN—
AT LAST YEAR'S HARVEST FESTIVAL A TRAVELING ENTER-TAINER INVITED ME
"WITH ALL THE HULLABALOO OF THE FESTIVAL, IT WOULD BE EASY TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY UNDETECTED"
"I'LL TAKE YOU WHEREVER YOU WANT."
BUT I TURNED HIM DOWN

ARGENT!
IT REALLY IS HEART-ENING TO HAVE YOU BACK HOME FROM NOW ON, TOO, I HOPE—
PRIN-CESS.
SHE'S MUCH MORE KNOWL-EDGEABLE THAN I AM ABOUT DISEASES
YES. I AM ALMOST FINISHED THERE'S JUST SOMETHING I WANT TO ASK LULU THE DOCTOR I APPRENTICED UNDER IN CASTORIA.
I FIGURED MAYBE YOU WERE ABOUT DONE BY NOW SO I THOUGHT I'D SEE HOW THE INVESTIGATION WAS GOING
PLEASE BECOME AN EXEMPLARY RULER

I COULD TAKE YOUR HAND
BECAUSE WHO I AM NOW
PRINCESS!
GO ON
THE KING CAN'T BECOME KING BY HIM OR HERSELF IN THE BEGINNING, SHE NEEDS THE SUPPORT OF HER PEOPLE
EVERYONE IS WAITING FOR YOU.
PRINCESS
YOU SHOULDN'T THINK SERIOUSLY ABOUT SUCH THINGS


...AND LIVE OUT A NORMAL LIFE SOMEWHERE ELSE
...MY FAINT WISH, THAT I THOUGHT I'D BURIED AT THE BOTTOM OF MY HEART, TO ABANDON THE THRONE AND MY COUNTRY...
MAYBE HE WAS READING MY MIND.
PRINCESS...!.
IF I...
REACHED MY HAND OUT TO YOU... WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

I WON'T LOOK BACK.
I WON'T LOOK BACK, BUT I WANT YOU TO KEEP WATCHING ME FROM BEHIND AS YOU ALWAYS HAVE


AND DON'T LOOK BACK.
I KNOW, ARGENT THANK YOU...FOR EVERYTHING

"WELCOME HOME, CORDA."
"I'M HAPPY YOU MADE IT BACK ALIVE."
MY DUTY...
"THERE IS A WAY FOR YOU TO BECOME HUMAN AGAIN, AS THE DAY YOU WERE BORN."
"ONLY IT REQUIRES A CERTAIN SACRIFICE. WHICH IS WHY I DIDN'T MENTION IT BEFORE."
MY ENTIRE BODY IS TOXIC. HOW CAN THERE BE ANY HOPE FOR ME...?"
"DON'T BE SO HASTY. THERE'S STILL HOPE FOR YOU."
"WHY COULDN'T YOU HAVE JUST LET ME DIE?"
...ALL OF THE TOXINS IN YOUR BODY WILL ACCUMULATE IN THE EMBRYO. OTHERWISE LEAVING YOUR BODY AS CLEAN AS A MOUNTAIN STREAM
"IF YOU HAVE RELATIONS WITH ANOTHER BASILISK AND BECOME PREGNANT WITH CHILD
"WHAT'S YOUR REAL MOTIVE?"
"I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU'RE TELLING ME THIS FOR MY SAKE."
"FORTUNATELY, BEAZOL'S FORMER ROYAL APOTHECARY, A BASILISK HIMSELF, HAS RETURNED HOME. I BELIEVE HE WOULD MAKE A MOST SUITABLE PARTNER FOR THIS ENDEAVOR."
"OF COURSE, THE LADY WILL BE THE WORSE OFF FOR IT. IN FACT, STILL BIRTHS ARE QUITE COMMON IN THIS SITUATION."

YOU AND THE PRINCESS BOTH, CORDA.
I WONDER WHY WOMEN ARE SO OBSTINATE AND FOOLISH.
YOU CAN'T SAY I DIDN'T TELL HER.
I'M SURE YOU WOULDN'T UNDERSTAND. YOU'VE NEVER FALLEN IN LOVE WITH SOMEONE
WHAK!!
SILENCE, BASILISK!!
JUST KEEP YOUR MOUTH SHUT AND DO YOUR DUTY!
I DOUBT THAT WAS THE REASON. YOU WERE PROBABLY LACKING IN HEART.
BUT I WAS A CHUBBY CHILD AND THAT WAS ENOUGH TO PUT HER OFF. SHE COULDN'T SEE PAST MY BABY FAT
OH, WHEN I WAS A BOY, THERE WAS A GIRL WHO I WAS QUITE FOND OF.

THANK YOU FOR THE REPORT
SO THAT'S WHAT'S GOING ON AT THE HARBOR AT KENT..
THINGS LEFT UNDONE SAY AFTER ALL YOU'RE STILL A CHILD IN SOME RESPECTS THERE MUST BE VARIOUS THINGS THAT YOU WON'T HAVE THE CHANCE TO ACHIEVE ONCE MARRIED
RE-GRETS?
YOU DON'T HAVE ANY REGRETS ABOUT THE UPCOMING WEDDING DO YOU?
BY THE WAY PRIMULA
EXCUSE ME THEN, FATHER
QUITE THE CONTRARY I FEEL LUCKY TO HAVE BEEN BORN AS A PRINCESS I'VE EXPERIENCED MUCH HAPPINESS AS A DIRECT RESULT-
THERE AREN'T FATHER. NOT ANY MORE

"IF YOU CAN WIN HIM OVER TO OUR SIDE, WE'LL GIVE YOU YOUR FREEDOM IN EXCHANGE."
"VERY WELL. LET'S PUT ALL CARDS ON THE TABLE. WE WANT TO USE HIM AS A PAWN."
"OF COURSE, WHAT I SAID ABOUT DETOXIFICATION THROUGH PREGNANCY WAS NO LIE."
"BUT I'LL LEAVE THE REST OF THAT MATTER TO YOU."
I WONDER- IF I CAN DRAIN MY BODY OF POISONS WOULD HE
WOULD PRINCE DANIEL AND I BE ABLE TO TOUCH EACH OTHER?

YOUR MAJ-ESTY?
THAT'S ALL RIGHT, YOUR MAJESTY
I'VE EVEN DOUBTED YOU, AT TIMES
OH I'VE BEEN WELL AWARE OF THAT- SIRE, EVER SINCE I CAME INTO YOUR SERVICE
LOOKING BACK NOW, I DON'T KNOW IF THE CHOICES I MADE OVER ALL THESE YEARS WERE CORRECT.
I WANTED TO TELL HER NOT TO PUT TOO MUCH TRUST IN PEOPLE . IN VASSALS
MAJ-ESTY!
BUT YOUR FORTHRIGHTNESS IS EXACTLY WHAT PUTS ME AT EASE.
I SUPPOSE I DO WHICH HAS GOTTEN ME INTO MANY ARGUMENTS WITH YOU. MY NECK HAS COME PERILOUSLY CLOSE TO THE CHOPPING BLOCK ON MORE THAN ONE OCCASION I FEAR.
BUT YOU TREAT EVERYONE WITH EQUAL MEASURES OF HARSHNESS.
AND YOU'RE AS SHARP TONGUED AS THE DAY I MET YOU ALGON.
THIS COUNTRY STILL NEEDS HIM
—BY BANISHING HIM FROM BEAZOL.
PLEASE DON'T PUNISH ARGENT .
THERE IS HOWEVER, ONE FINAL REQUEST I WOULD MAKE OF YOU
VERY WELL—
GOOD-NIGHT, FATHER
NEVER MIND IT'S LATE WE'LL TALK MORE ON THIS, NEXT TIME.
?
ONLY, PRIMULA, DON'T—

THAT'S WHY I HAVE TO GET MY HEAD SCREWED ON STRAIGHT
AND SO I DON'T LOOK BACK AT THE PAST AS WELL...
I'M SURE THINGS WILL BE FINE
YOU'LL START A NEW LIFE, HAVE A BABY OR TWO, AND THE DAYS WILL JUST FLY BY
YOU WON'T EVEN HAVE TIME TO LOOK BACK
YOU'RE SPEAKING FROM EXPERIENCE?
I SUPPOSE I AM.
THANK YOU, ELISA. GOOD NIGHT
GOOD NIGHT, MY LADY
—THAT'S RIGHT. THAT'S WHY I'LL NEVER FORGET..

IF SOMETHING SHOULD HAPPEN TO ME, TAKE CARE OF PRIMULA.
BE AS SEVERE WITH HER AS YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN WITH ME
I WILL, SIRE
I'M IMPRESSED THAT YOU'VE BEEN ABLE TO BREAK IT OFF WITH SOMEONE YOU CARED ABOUT IN THE PAST WITH SUCH RESOLUTION
ELISA? HOW DO YOU KNOW?
I HAVE NO COMPLAINTS ABOUT LORCA
HE WORKS VERY HARD HE'S BRAVE, KIND—IF ANYTHING, I DON'T DESERVE HIM. HE'S VERY DEAR TO ME
BECAUSE I HAD TO SAY THE SAME TYPE OF FAREWELL TO SOMEONE BEFORE I GOT MARRIED
BECAUSE A ROYAL MARRIAGE IS CONTROLLED BY THE EXPECTATIONS OF THE MANY, RATHER THAN THE WISHES OF THE TWO PEOPLE AT THE HEART OF IT

YOU DON'T KNOW THE HALF OF IT!
TOYING WITH SODA'S EMOTIONS? YOU REALLY HAVE CHANGED, INSIDE AND OUT!
I'M ONLY JOKING
MASTER, COME ON! DON'T BE SO COLD!
IF YOU WANT TO STAY AT THE PALACE, YOU'RE ALWAYS FREE TO GO BACK TO ZANTAK. THE CURRENT ROYAL APOTHECARY
LET ME TELL YOU WHAT MASTER WENT THROUGH IN CASTORIA.
IT APPEARS THAT MY BODY IS DETOXIFYING STEADILY.
IT'S STILL TOO EARLY TO TAKE THE STONE OUT NOW. THOUGH, NOT UNLESS I WANT TO BE A BASILISK AGAIN
THERE'S THAT SHARP, SHOOTING PAIN IN THE PLACE WHERE THE STONE IS BURIED AGAIN DOES PAIN COME WITH THE CRYSTALLI-ZATION PROCESS?
G-GOOD
MASTER, I FINISHED LOADING THE BOXES!
THROB!
!

LULU, HOW ARE YOU? I HAVE RETURNED SAFELY TO BEAZOL.
IN DISOBEYING THE KING'S ORDER BY LEAVING THE COUNTRY, I WAS PREPARED TO FACE A HARSH PUNISHMENT SUCH AS EXECUTION OR BANISHMENT BUT HAVE BEEN SPARED THROUGH THE KING'S COMPASSION
HENCEFORTH, I INTEND TO REMAIN NEAR THE PALACE, SERVING MY COUNTRY AS AN APOTHECARY AS BEST I CAN
My ambition of opening my own nationwide chain of apothecary shops is farther away than ever
SIGHHH SO WE'RE DEMOTED FROM ROYAL APOTHECARIES TO PLAIN OLD TOWN APOTHECARIES

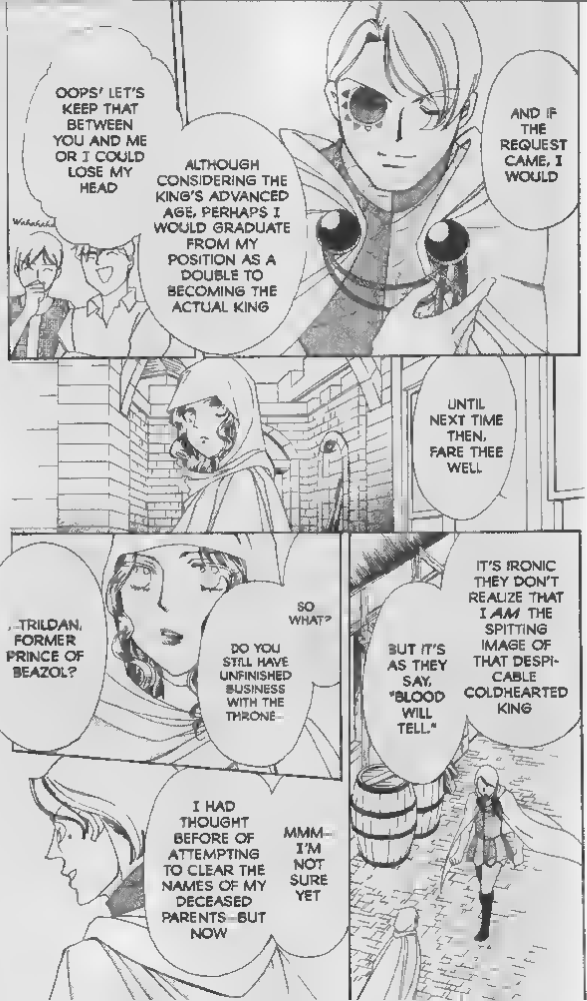
MY HUSBAND AND NEON
I FINALLY MADE A FAMILY AND YOU STOLE THEM FROM ME. YOU TOOK AWAY EVERYTHING I HAD AND I'LL NEVER FORGIVE YOU FOR IT, KING AND PRINCESS BOTH!

Recipe 31 • The Prince's Decision

THERE HAVEN'T BEEN ANY PARTICULARLY UNPLEASANT SIDE EFFECTS THE REASON I'M WRITING IS BECAUSE YOU'RE AN EXPERT ON DISEASES AND I HAVE A QUESTION REGARDING A CERTAIN ONE.
MANY PEOPLE HAVE COOPERATED TO GET ME THIS FAR, LULU AMONG THEM. IT'S THE LEAST I CAN DO TO BEAR THIS MUCH PAIN
I'M COMING
HURRY UP MASTER!
FOR NOW, IT APPEARS THAT THE TROUBLESOME APOTHECARY HAS BEEN DRIVEN AWAY FROM THE PRINCESS' VICINITY
SO WHEN DO I MAKE MY MOVE?
NEXT, I'M GOING TO DRIVE HIM INTO A BIGGER CORNER.
WHEN HE'S TOTALLY ISOLATED, YOU'LL COME INTO PLAY.
PATIENCE
RECIPE 31 THE END

I DON'T KNOW HOW MANY TIMES I'VE LOOKED BACK ON THAT DAY.
THE KING'S YOUNGER BROTHER, TIGASON... HIS WIFE, DERMOBEDA ...PRINCE TRILDAN...
AT FIRST, IT HAUNTED MY DREAMS EVERY NIGHT
THESE THREE ARE TO BE EXECUTED FOR SUSPICION OF ATTEMPTING TO ASSASSINATE PRINCESS PRIMULA
DERMO, DON'T
WHEN THE ROYAL FAMILY THROWS THE ORDER OF THE COUNTRY INTO CHAOS, IT TAKES THE DEATHS OF THOSE RESPONSIBLE ...AND THOSE DEAR TO THEM... TO SET THINGS RIGHT
NO, PLEASE! AT LEAST SPARE TRILDAN...
TRILDAN, RUN!
AND SOMEDAY TAKE REVENGE ON THE KING OF BEAZOL!!
FATHER!
MOTHER... WHY?

WHEN I WAS LITTLE, I FOUND AN OLD PASSAGE-WAY IN THE CASTLE BY CHANCE.
WHEN I FOL-LOWED IT, IT TOOK ME TO A SMALL GARDEN.
SINCE THEN I'VE SPENT TIME IN THAT GARDEN WHICH NO ONE ELSE KNOWS ABOUT WHENEVER I'VE WANTED TO CRY ALONE OR ADMIRE A TREASURE.
I'VE DECIDED THAT I WON'T LOOK BACK TO THE PAST...
KACHINK
BUT I DON'T THINK I'LL EVER TAKE THIS PASSAGE AGAIN.


OOPS! LET'S KEEP THAT BETWEEN YOU AND ME OR I COULD LOSE MY HEAD
Wahahah!
ALTHOUGH CONSIDERING THE KING'S ADVANCED AGE, PERHAPS I WOULD GRADUATE FROM MY POSITION AS A DOUBLE TO BECOMING THE ACTUAL KING
AND IF THE REQUEST CAME, I WOULD
UNTIL NEXT TIME THEN, FARE THEE WELL
...TRILDAN, FORMER PRINCE OF BEAZOL?
DO YOU STILL HAVE UNFINISHED BUSINESS WITH THE THRONE—
SO WHAT?
I HAD THOUGHT BEFORE OF ATTEMPTING TO CLEAR THE NAMES OF MY DECEASED PARENTS—BUT NOW
MMM— I'M NOT SURE YET
BUT IT'S AS THEY SAY, "BLOOD WILL TELL."
IT'S IRONIC THEY DON'T REALIZE THAT I AM THE SPITTING IMAGE OF THAT DESPICABLE COLDHEARTED KING

OF COURSE! MY BEAUTIFUL LITTLE DAUGHTER COULD HAVE CAUGHT A COLD!
ALL I DID WAS HAVE A FIT OF COUGHING IN FRONT OF THE PRINCESS! YOU CALL THAT PLOTTING TO OVERTHROW THE GOVERNMENT?!
AND AT SOME POINT, IT BECAME A FICTIONAL STORY, PLAYED OUT ON A STAGE..
DUN
CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP
THANK YOU. THANK YOU.
YOU'VE REALLY GOT THE KING DOWN!
I BET YOU COULD EVEN DOUBLE FOR THE KING!
YOU SOUND JUST LIKE HIM!
IT'S GRATIFYING TO HEAR THAT

THANK YOU, ALGON. I SHALL
KACHA
I SHALL ACT AS YOUR AGENT REGARDING THE CEREMONY PREPARATIONS, SO PLEASE REST, YOUR MAJESTY
IT'S TOO TIGHT! I FEEL LIKE I'M GOING TO FAINT!
BUT I'LL HAVE THE SLEEVES FIXED IN NO TIME
HE MUST HAVE GROWN TALLER AGAIN. HE IS AT THAT AGE.
THE SLEEVES SEEM TO BE A LITTLE SHORT EVEN THOUGH IT FIT HIM PERFECTLY THE LAST TIME HE TRIED IT ON.
There's no reason to fuss at Marcel!
IT WILL BE FINE IF YOU JUST GO ON A CRASH DIET
HOW DOES PRINCE LORCA'S OUTFIT FIT?
A CRASH DIET?! UGH!

I WAS ON A POINTLESS TRIP WITH MY AMNESIAC FATHER AND HAD JUST ARRIVED IN MORD.
AFTER HE LOST INFREE, HIS "INSIDE MAN" OF NAVARA.
...OUR FRIEND CHOSE ME TO REPLACE HIM.
"I'M GOING TO DRIVE HIM INTO A BIGGER CORNER! COMDA, AND WHEN HE'S TOTALLY ISOLATED YOU'LL COME INTO PLAY."
"AND SO, THE TROUBLESOME APOTHECARY HAS DISAPPEARED FROM THE PRINCESS'S VICINITY."
WHAT IS "OUR FRIEND" TRYING TO MAKE HIM DO?
WHAT DOES THIS MAN WANT?
BEAZOL CASTLE. TEN DAYS UNTIL THE WEDDING

OH I...I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT I SAID MUST HAVE SOUNDED SO CRUEL...
ELISA JUST LOST HER YOUNG SON LAST YEAR
I'M SORRY
LORCA...
LET'S MAKE A COUNTRY WHERE NO ONE EVER HAS TO BE SAD
ALL RIGHT, I'LL ATTEMPT TO GO ON A CRASH DIET
S-SURE

ELISA?
THAT'S RIDICULOUS! YOU CAN'T PRESENT YOURSELF WITH THE SLEEVES RIDING UP YOUR ARMS!
OH WHY BOTHER? I AM ONLY GOING TO WEAR THIS ONCE
I WAS JUST SURPRISED IS ALL. NO WOMAN BUT THE PRINCESS HAS EVER TALKED TO ME SO STERNLY BEFORE
THAT'S ALL RIGHT I DON'T MIND
I DON'T KNOW WHAT CAME OVER ME. THAT I WOULD BE SO RUDE TO YOU, PRINCE...
I-I'M SORRY
ELISA?
I
IF THE PRINCESS WERE MY OLDER SISTER, YOU WOULD BE MY MOTHER ELISA

I SEE HE'S RETURNED TO HIS OLD HAUNT
I WAS ONLY PULLING YOUR LEG!!
AND I CAME ALL THIS WAY TO BRING YOU A PRESENT FORGET IT. I'M GOING HOME!
SEE FOR YOURSELF
KA-CHA
RESEARCH? WHAT KIND?
OH PINE.
WITHOUT ANY CUSTOMERS COMING IN WE'VE GOT NOTHING BUT FREE TIME HERE, BUT HE'S USING IT TO RESEARCH SOMETHING IT'S LIKE HE'S OBSESSED
SO HOW IS HE?
HE SAYS IT'S FOR A NEW MEDICINE.
PUFF
ULP! WHAT THE...?! IT SMELLS LIKE SOMETHING'S ROTTING!!!
HELLO, HELLO!
AH! A CUSTOMER! GOOD AFTER-NOON, SIR!
WELCOME TO THE FORMER ROYAL APOTHECARY ARGENT'S PHARMACY!!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, JUST ME?
OH, IT'S JUST YOU, GARNA.
I DIDN'T THINK WE WERE GOING TO OPEN UP SHOP THIS FAR OUT OF TOWN!
NOBODY EVEN LIVES AROUND HERE!
SCRUB
AND THERE'S A HOLE IN THE ROOF!
SCRUB
NO PATIENT WILL WANT TO COME TO THE BOONIES!!!

. BUT IT SEEMS THAT IT WILL TAKE A MONTH FOR IT TO ARRIVE.
I ASKED A MERCHANT WHO FREQUENTS THE CASTLE KITCHEN TO DELIVER IT .
ACTUALLY, THE REASON I'M HERE IS BECAUSE OF THE LETTER YOU WROTE THAT DOCTOR
YOU'LL JUST HAVE TO BE PATIENT.
IT'S STILL A BUBBLING CAULDRON OF CHAOS INSIDE CASTORIA.
REALLY. ?
NOTHING JUST... "PLEASE BE HAPPY."
I DON'T MIND BEING A CARRIER PIGEON
IS THERE ANY MESSAGE FOR THE PRIN-CESS?
WELL I'D BETTER BE GETTING BACK TO THE CASTLE I HAVE TO PREPARE A TON OF FOOD FOR THE WEDDING DAY

...THAT USES MOLD AS ITS MAIN INGREDIENT
LULU'S HYPOTHESIS IS THAT THINGS TOO SMALL FOR THE EYE TO SEE ACT AS GO-BETWEENS TO PASS COMMUNI-CABLE DISEASES ON FROM ONE PERSON TO ANOTHER.
SO MASTER HAS THE PREPOSTEROUS IDEA OF OVERLAYING LAYERS OF GLASS TO MAGNIFY THESE TEENY TINY THINGS
HE SAYS HE'S SEARCHING FOR A WAY TO MAKE THEM VISIBLE TO THE HUMAN EYE
THE OTHER DAY I WROTE HER A LETTER, ASKING FOR A HINT ABOUT TREATING THE UNKNOWN DISEASE THAT BROKE OUT AT THE PORT IN KENT
LULU THE DOCTOR I APPRENTICED UNDER IN CASTORIA TAUGHT ME THAT BLUE MOLD PREVENTS OTHER FORMS OF DECAY AND NECROSIS
SO THAT'S WHY YOU WERE POLISHING GLASS OUTSIDE, EH?
JUST WHAT I SAID!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN "PREPOSTEROUS" SODA?

NEON...
ELISA?
"NEON, WHAT ARE YOU DOING OUT OF BED?! YOU NEED YOUR REST!"
"BUT MY COUGH'S GONE..."
.. THANKS TO ARGENT'S MEDICINE!"

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONCERN.
AFTER ALL THE TROUBLE YOU WENT TO TO MAKE YOUR BODY NORMAL, YOU DON'T WANT TO RUIN IT YOU LOOK TOO PALE!
IMMERSING YOURSELF IN YOUR WORK ISN'T A BAD IDEA, BUT DON'T OVERDO IT
GOT IT

TAKE CARE.
I'LL BE BACK.

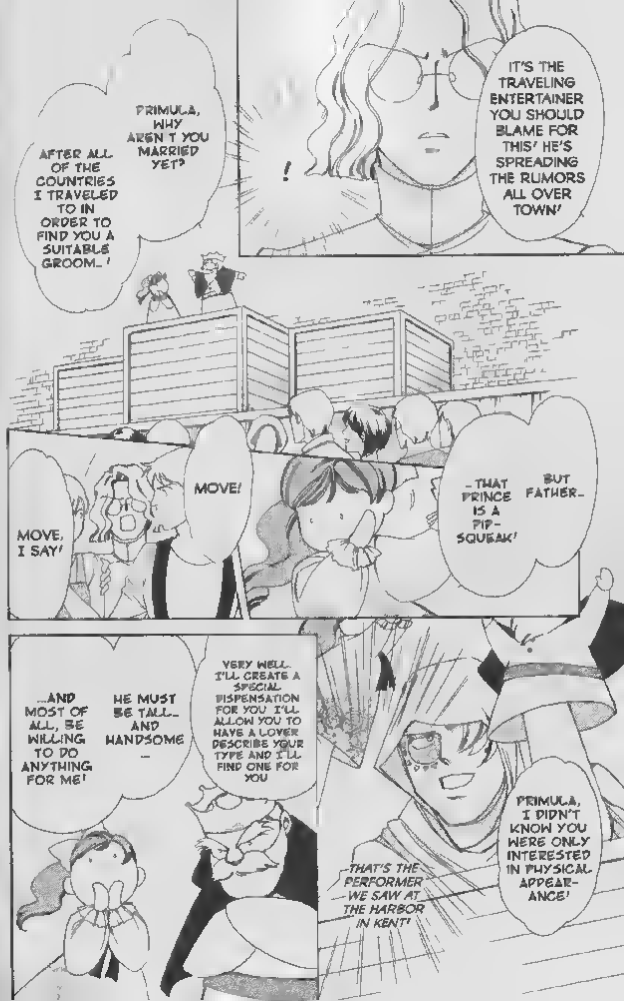
OWWW
I THOUGHT YOU'D BE DEPRESSED AFTER BEING SEPARATED FROM THE PRINCESS BUT YOU SEEM ALL RIGHT MY MIND IS AT EASE

ELISA?
" THANKS TO ARGENT'S MEDICINE!"
.ANY TIME, PRINCE LORCA.
IF YOU LIKE.. YOU CAN THINK OF ME AS YOUR MOTHER..
SO NAVARA'S THIRD PRINCE IS HALF COM-MONER EH?
GOOD NIGHT!
IN THAT CASE YOU CAN THINK OF ME AS A SON. SO FEEL FREE TO SCOLD ME WHENEVER I DESERVE IT!

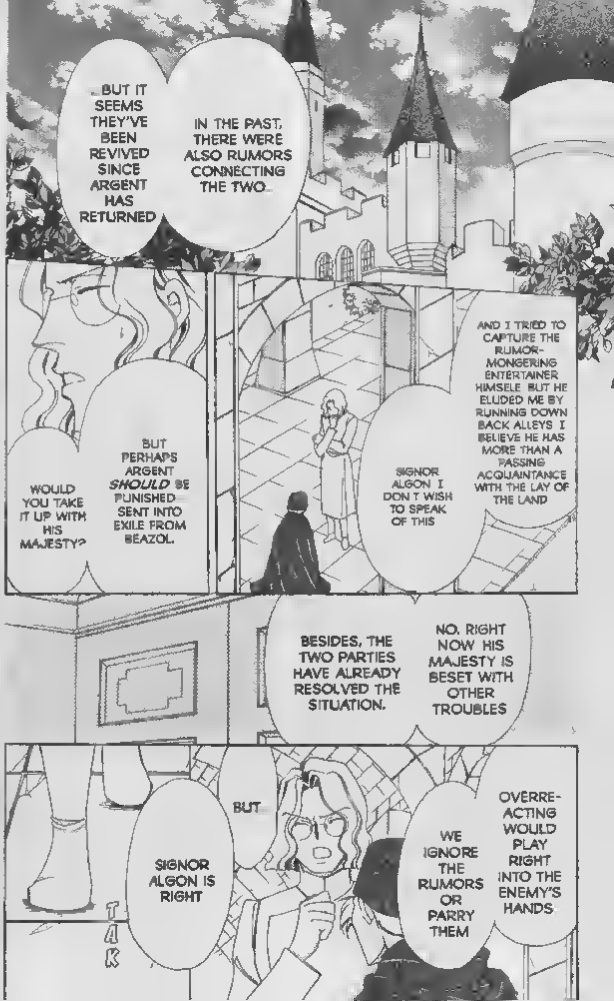
WELL THEN, WE CAN BOTH BE SORRY!
FOR JUST A MOMENT I HAD YOU MIXED UP WITH MY SON THAT WAS TERRIBLY RUDE OF ME
N-NOT AT ALL I'M THE ONE WHO'S SORRY
PRINCE LORCA...
I'M SORRY ABOUT WHAT I SAID BEFORE I DIDN'T KNOW-
THE "THREE PRINCES OF NAVARA" ALL HAVE DIFFERENT MOTHERS
TO TELL THE TRUTH, I LOST MY MOTHER AT AN EARLY AGE...WHICH IS WHY IT PROBABLY SLIPPED OUT
-BUT THANKS TO THE PRINCESS AND ARGENT I THINK I'VE MADE QUITE AN IMPROVE MENT
I WENT THROUGH A ROUGH PERIOD WHICH IS PUTTING IT MILDLY
OH, MY..
SHE WAS BOOTED OUT OF THE CASTLE SOON AFTER I WAS BORN .AND THAT WAS THAT
ONLY MINE WAS A COMMONER. MAKING MATTERS WORSE, I WAS A SICKLY BABY

WELL, ALL THE INGREDI-ENTS ARE IN PLACE.
TIME TO BEGIN STAGE TWO
SO IT'S TRUE ABOUT THE PRINCESS AND THE APOTH-ECARY?
I HEARD THE PRINCESS REQUESTED SPECIAL TREATMENT OF HIM BY HIS MAJESTY
I SUPPOSE WE'RE GOING TO HAVE THE AGE OF A FEMALE KING WITH A MALE LOVER
WHAT ARE YOU TWO TALKING ABOUT?
I-I'M SORRY, SIGNIOR CARLI!
SPREADING RUMORS LIKE THAT JUST DAYS BEFORE THE WEDDING... YOU BETTER NEVER LET ME CATCH YOU AGAIN!
BUT SIGNIOR CARLI...
PERHAPS I DO.
IT SOUNDS AS IF YOU TRUST THE PRINCE AND PRINCESS.
SPEAKING OF YOUR PER-SONAL HISTORY, THOUGH?
THAT MAY BE A USEFUL BIT OF INFOR-MATION
PRINCE TRILDAN...
THIS IS UNEX-PECTED WHAT ELSE?
...AND THE PRINCESS APPEARS TO HAVE CUT ALL TIES WITH HIM
THE APOTH-ECARY IS NOWHERE AROUND.
MM WHAT CAN YOU TELL ME ABOUT THE STATE OF AFFAIRS INSIDE THE CASTLE?
CONTINUE YOUR SURVEIL-LANCE AND REPORTS. I'LL GIVE YOU INSTRUC-TIONS AS THEY ARISE
YES. MAYBE HE HAS A CHRONIC DISEASE. THE POSSIBILITY DOES EXIST.
I HEAR HE COLLAPSED JUST PRIOR TO THE PRINCESS'S LAST BIRTHDAY PARTY. MAYBE...
I HAVEN'T SEEN HIS MAJESTY FOR THE PAST SEVERAL DAYS, NOT EVEN AT THE WEDDING PREPARA-TIONS

I WANT A SKILLED APOTH-ECARY!
AH! SIGNOR CARLI, THE PRINCESS'S ETIQUETTE INSTRUCTOR!
RUN!
WHAT THE DEVIL IS EVERYONE DOING HERE?!
I WISH
QUICK-LY!!
SOME-BODY...
...APPREHEND THAT MAN!


IT'S THE TRAVELING ENTERTAINER YOU SHOULD BLAME FOR THIS! HE'S SPREADING THE RUMORS ALL OVER TOWN!
PRIMULA, WHY AREN'T YOU MARRIED YET?
AFTER ALL OF THE COUNTRIES I TRAVELED TO IN ORDER TO FIND YOU A SUITABLE GROOM...!
MOVE, I SAY!
MOVE!
BUT FATHER-
-THAT PRINCE IS A PIP-SQUEAK!
VERY WELL. I'LL CREATE A SPECIAL DISPENSATION FOR YOU. I'LL ALLOW YOU TO HAVE A LOVER DESCRIBE YOUR TYPE AND I'LL FIND ONE FOR YOU
...AND MOST OF ALL, BE WILLING TO DO ANYTHING FOR ME!
HE MUST BE TALL... AND HANDSOME...
-THAT'S THE PERFORMER WE SAW AT THE HARBOR IN KENT!
PRIMULA, I DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE ONLY INTERESTED IN PHYSICAL APPEAR-ANCE!

IT'S THE NATURE OF RUMORS TO GET BACK TO THE VERY PEOPLE THAT THEY'RE ABOUT
PRINCE LORCA, YOU'VE HEARD THEM?
THE RUMORS DON'T BOTHER ME AT ALL.
FORTUNATELY I DOUBT THE RUMORS HAVE REACHED THE EARS OF ARGENT OR MY OLDER BROTHERS ALL OF WHOM ARE OUTSIDE THE CITY
NO SENSE IN RESPONDING TO INSULTS OF ME BEING A "PIPSQUEAK" AS I'M APPARENTLY GROWING LIKE A WEED
PRINCE LORCA
AND ANYWAY, THIS COUNTRY NEEDS ARGENT.
YOU WON'T FIND A BETTER APOTHECARY
AS A PARTNER OF THE NEXT REIGNING KING, CONSIDER IT AN ORDER I'M SURE YOU WON'T DISAPPOINT ME!


...BUT IT SEEMS THEY'VE BEEN REVIVED SINCE ARGENT HAS RETURNED
IN THE PAST, THERE WERE ALSO RUMORS CONNECTING THE TWO...
WOULD YOU TAKE IT UP WITH HIS MAJESTY?
BUT PERHAPS ARGENT *SHOULD* BE PUNISHED SENT INTO EXILE FROM BEAZOL.
SIGNOR ALGON I DON'T WISH TO SPEAK OF THIS
AND I TRIED TO CAPTURE THE RUMOR-MONGERING ENTERTAINER HIMSELF BUT HE ELUDED ME BY RUNNING DOWN BACK ALLEYS I BELIEVE HE HAS MORE THAN A PASSING ACQUAINTANCE WITH THE LAY OF THE LAND
BESIDES, THE TWO PARTIES HAVE ALREADY RESOLVED THE SITUATION.
NO. RIGHT NOW HIS MAJESTY IS BESET WITH OTHER TROUBLES
BUT
SIGNOR ALGON IS RIGHT
WE IGNORE THE RUMORS OR PARRY THEM
OVERREACTING WOULD PLAY RIGHT INTO THE ENEMY'S HANDS
TAK

I WAS HECKLED BY THEM ONCE AT AN OFFICIAL EVENT
SEVERAL YEARS AGO, THERE WAS A FACTION OF ROYALS WHO WERE OPPOSED TO MY EVENTUAL ENTHRONEMENT
I DON'T THINK I'VE TOLD YOU YET LORCA.
FOR SOME REASON I'VE SUDDENLY BECOME NERVOUS
EVER SINCE THEN, I WAS SCARED TO STAND IN FRONT OF PEOPLE
I THOUGHT I HAD CONQUERED MY FEAR FOR THE MOST PART BUT...
LET'S PRACTICE TOGETHER
DON'T WORRY FROM NOW ON, I'LL BE WITH YOU.
IF I HEAR THE RUMORS—
—THEN THE PRINCESS MUST KNOW OF THEM AS WELL.
LOOK AT THEM! SEE HOW CLOSE THEY ARE? THOSE RUMORS ARE POPPY COCK!

TAK TAK TAK TAK
PRINCESS! ARE YOU TRAINING FOR THE CER EMONY ALONE?
LORCA.
I'M SORRY I DIDN'T MEAN TO STARTLE YOU.
CLATTER

BUT WHY ARE THERE RUMORS NOW...?
IT SEEMS THAT THE ENTERTAINER'S GOSSIP HASN'T MADE MUCH OF AN IMPACT AFTER ALL
FROM NOW ON, I HAVE TO BECOME HER SHIELD, IN PLACE OF ARGENT.
THE PRINCESS CHOSE ME.
BESIDES, THERE HAS BEEN SOME RESPONSE IF YOU LOOK AT THE PUBLIC REACTION YOU'LL UNDERSTAND
OH PLEASE. I'VE JUST BEGUN.

LORCA:
SAY, YOU'RE RIGHT
I HAVE TO LOOK UP TO SEE YOUR EYES NOW.
NO. I WAS JUST THINKING THAT ELISA WAS RIGHT. YOU HAVE GROWN TALLER
WHAT? DO I HAVE SOMETHING ON MY FACE?
GROWING TALLER IS THE ONLY THING I'LL DO "AHEAD" OF YOU PRINCESS. EVERYTHING ELSE WILL BE TOGETHER.
BOYS CERTAINLY DO SHOOT UP AHEAD OF GIRLS SUDDENLY
I PROMISE.

NOK NOK
WHAT?! YOU CHANGE YOUR MIND TOO FAST—
NO I SOLD IT TO HELP PAY FOR RESEARCH EXPENSES
—THAT DIAMOND RING YOU BOUGHT FROM POPOLA?
BY THE WAY, MASTER, WERE YOU ABLE TO GIVE THE PRINCESS...
COMING! I'LL BE RIGHT THERE!
YEESH! WHO COULD IT BE AT THIS HOUR?!
MASTER, COME QUICK! WE'VE GOT A CUSTOMER!!
DUN DUN DUN DUN
I COULD NEVER GIVE THIS TO HER NOW..
I THINK IT'S ALSO ABOUT TIME FOR YOU TO BEGIN YOUR PRELIMINARY WORK.
WELL CORDA..
AND MY SPECIALTY IS SPREADING THAT CONTAGION BIT BY BIT.
THEY'RE LOOKING FOR CHANGE AGAIN
I NEVER IMAGINED MY EXPERIENCE POLISHING ROCKS IN CASTORIA WOULD COME IN HANDY HERE
OKAY..
POLISH IT AGAIN
YOU DIDN'T DO A GOOD JOB WITH THE CURVED LENS.

HAVE WE MET BEFORE...?
IT REMINDS ME OF SOME-THING
BY THE WAY, THAT'S AN UNUSUAL PERFUME YOU'RE WEARING
I'M FINE JUST A LITTLE BACK PAIN...
APOTH-ECARY, IS SOME-THING WRONG?
UH ..I-I HAVE TO BE GETTING HOME!
"IF YOU HAVE RELATIONS WITH ANOTHER BASILISK AND BECOME PREGNANT WITH CHILD, ALL OF THE TOXINS IN YOUR BODY WILL ACCUMULATE IN THE EMBRYO, OTHERWISE LEAVING YOUR BODY AS CLEAN AS A WHISTLE."
"THERE IS A WAY FOR YOU TO BECOME HUMAN AGAIN, AS THE DAY YOU WERE BORN."
I'M NOT SURE ..MAY-BE..
MASTER-, DID YOU INSULT HER OR SOME-THING?
HUH? YOU'RE LEAVING ALREADY?
KEEP THE CHANGE

I'll bring you some tea.
IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE WE'VE HAD A PATIENT...SO PLEASE FORGIVE THE MESS.
THIS IS THE OTHER BASILISK?
MAYBE IT'S BECAUSE HE DYED HIS HAIR, BUT HE LOOKS NO DIFFERENT THAN A NORMAL HUMAN BEING TO ME.
SO WHAT SEEMS TO BE THE TROUBLE TODAY?
"ANY-THING IS FINE."
"GET SOME MEDICINE AND COME BACK."
UM...
WHERE DO YOU HAVE SYMPTOMS? DON'T HESITATE TO TELL ME.
!
LET'S SEE...
I'VE GOT JUST THE MEDICINE...
IT'S MY FATHER. ACTUALLY, HIS HEART HAS BEEN SEIZING UP ON HIM...
RATTLE

W-WHAT?!
AFTER ALL, I'M A BASTARD CHILD MYSELF!
I DON'T CARE IF THE PRINCESS TAKES ONE OR TWO LOVERS!
W-W-WHAT?! WHERE DID YOU HEAR THAT?!
WHAT DOES IT MATTER?
THAT SHE'S ACTUALLY THE PRODUCT OF A COUPLING BETWEEN YOUR DECEASED QUEEN AND ONE OF HER LOVERS.
WELL, I'VE HEARD THE RUMORS THAT EVEN THE PRINCESS ISN'T REALLY YOUR CHILD, YOUR MAJESTY
SOMEBODY WHO KNOWS A LOT ABOUT THE ROYAL FAMILY A TRAITOR ON THE INSIDE? OR MAYBE AN ENEMY WHO WORMED THEIR WAY IN LIKE WITH INFREE
I HAVE TO THINK THAT SOMEBODY'S MOVING BEHIND THE SCENES USING THESE "SHOWS" FOR SOME PURPOSE.
THERE IS SOMETHING ODD ABOUT THIS.-
DUN
THAT'S THE STORY OF THE ENTIRE ROYAL FAMILY!!

I KNOW IT'S TO RETURN MY BODY TO NORMAL...
IS THIS REALLY THE RIGHT THING FOR ME TO DO?
BUT TOUCHING SOMEONE OTHER THAN PRINCE DANIEL BEING TOUCHED
STILL NO WORD FROM DANIEL?
ACTUALLY, KING ADONA, THERE'S EVEN MORE DISTRESSING NEWS- A RUMOR THAT HAS REACHED MY EARS
HE'S LEADING AS DISSIPATED A LIFE AS EVER
I APOLOGIZE YOUR MAJESTY
THE WEDDING BETWEEN OUR BROTHER LORCA, AND THE PRINCESS FROM BEAZOL IS IN THREE DAYS.
A RUMOR?
BUT HE KNOWS THE APPOINTED DAY PERHAPS PRINCE DANIEL MEANS TO GO THERE DIRECTLY INSTEAD OF COMING HOME FIRST.

CARL!
CALL THE CHIEF VASSALS TOGETHER AT ONCE
SIGNOR ALGON I DON'T THINK WE CAN AFFORD TO STAND BY ANY LONGER..
ABOUT AN ANTI-ROYAL FACTION IN THE PAST?
OF COURSE I WOULD BE VERY GRATEFUL FOR ANY HELP YOU COULD GIVE ME.
TIGASON?
ACTUALLY, THE "ANTI ROYAL" FACTION WAS A GROUP THAT SUPPORTED THE DUKE, TIGASON, TO BECOME KING
THE KING'S YOUNGER BROTHER- BEFORE THE PRINCESS WAS BORN HE WAS SUPPOSED TO BE THE SUCCESSOR TO THE THRONE
LORD TIGASON DIDN'T ACT LIKE ROYALTY HE WAS A BIT OF AN ODDBALL.
FWSH
YES. I'M SURE HE WILL ANYTHING TO GET BACK IN THE GOOD GRACES OF THE ROYALS.
CERTAINLY! I'LL DO ANYTHING I CAN TO FULFILL A REQUEST FROM YOU PRINCE LORCA

PERHAPS I'LL SIFT THROUGH THE PAST ONCE AND SEE IF ANY LIKELY SUSPECTS COME UP..
BRING MY CARRIAGE OUT!
I'M GOING TO HMM. YES. I SUPPOSE I'LL GO TO THE HOUSE OF A RUINED NOBLE FAMILY
AS YOU WISH, HIGHNESS.
THIS IS A PROBLEM.
RATHER THAN CALMING DOWN THE DISTURBANCE IS BROADENING
SOMEONE'S TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THIS SHOWING UP IN VARIOUS PLACES AND AGITATING EVEN MORE
SIGNOR ALGON. KING ADONA OF NAVARA HAS ARRIVED
WELL, WELL YOUR MAJESTY YOU'RE HERE EARLIER THAN EXPECTED
I'M SORRY TO REPORT THAT PRINCE LORCA ISN'T HERE AT THE MOMENT HE LEFT EARLY THIS MORNING
I DON'T CARE I'D LIKE TO HAVE AN AUDIENCE WITH HIS MAJESTY IMMEDIATELY
FOR THE PAST FEW DAYS, HIS MAJESTY HAS BEEN FEELING OUT OF SORTS AND THUS HAS TAKEN TO BED
PLEASE TALK TO ME IN HIS STEAD I CAN GUESS WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND.

BUT IF YOU CONSIDER THAT "ESPIONAGE", THEN YOU SHOULD SUSPECT THAT WOMAN, TOO... ELISA!
THAT'S BALDER-DASH! MY LIPS WERE LOOSE FROM DRINKING, THAT'S ALL!
AFTER ALL YOU WERE EXPELLED AS A CHIEF VASSAL AFTER LEAKING STATE SECRETS WEREN'T YOU?
ARE YOU ONE OF THEM?
WHEN BEAZOL WAS STILL AT WAR WITH NAVARA, SHE COLLABORATED WITH THE ENEMY AND WAS EVEN IMPRISONED FOR IT ONCE...
ELISA?
I KNOW THERE ARE CASES WHERE PEOPLE REFORM LIKE SIGNOR GARNA, BUT I'M NOT SO CERTAIN ABOUT HER.
BUT I DON'T CARE!!
AT THIS RATE, I'LL HAVE THE WHOLE POPULACE IN CHAINS!
BUT ELISA WAS PARDONED AND RELEASED BY THE PRINCESS DURING LAST YEAR'S HARVEST FESTIVAL.
UNFORTUNATELY, HER HUSBAND AND SON DIED OF DISEASE WHILE IN PRISON
TELL ME ABOUT THAT TOO
GLADLY!
You really do have a knack for it, don't you, brother-in-law?
THE PRINCESS IS EXACTLY OPPOSITE OF THE KING SHE TRUSTS TOO MUCH! EVEN AFTER THAT BUSINESS WITH SIGNORA CLARIS...
SOME DAYS, I WISH SOMEONE WOULD SWITCH PLACES WITH ME...
AHHH, IT'S A PAIN TO BE THE KING
IT SEEMS HE REALIZED IT TOO ON MORE THAN ONE OCCASION HE SAID "IF I WERE BORN AGAIN I WOULD BECOME A STREET PERFORMER."
HE WAS CONSIDERED A KIND SOUL, BUT HAD NO FORCE OF PERSONALITY AND WASN'T VERY GOOD AT DEALING WITH PEOPLE
I ASSURE YOU THAT'S NOT LORD TIGASON
A PERFORMER? LIKE THE ONE WHO'S RILING UP THE CROWDS AT THE HARBOR RIGHT NOW?
SOME TIME AFTER THAT THE PRINCE'S HORSE WAS FOUND AT THE BOTTOM OF A CLIFF. HE HASN'T BEEN SEEN SINCE, SO THE LIKELIEST SCENARIO IS THAT HE'S DEAD
MOTHER!
PRINCE RUNE AND SOMEDAY TAKE REVENGE!
...OR SEEMED TO BE. ACTUALLY THEIR SON ESCAPED DEATH. SOMEHOW, TWO YEARS AGO HE ROSE IN REVOLT AGAINST THE ROYAL FAMILY, BUT WHEN HIS BID FAILED HE ESCAPED
NO, HIS WIFE PLOTTED TO HAVE THE PRINCESS ASSASSINATED AND AS A RESULT THE WHOLE FAMILY WAS EXECUTED...
I WONDER
WHO COULD SAY FOR SURE THAT HE'S NOT STILL ALIVE?
IT'S ALL BECAUSE HE SHOWS NO MERCY WHEN IT COMES TO TRAITORS
JUST BETWEEN YOU AND ME, THERE ARE A GREAT NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO BEAR GRUDGES AGAINST HIS MAJESTY

THE PRINCESS STILL WANTS TO TRUST PEOPLE, EVEN AFTER HAVING THAT TRUST BETRAYED SEVERAL TIMES I KNOW THE FEELING
BECAUSE I KNOW WELL HOW EMPTY IT FEELS, HOW HARD IT IS... TO BE BESET BY PARANOIA.
DO YOU HAVE ANY SPECIAL REQUESTS?
HMMM
"I THINK THE THIEF MAY HAVE HAD HIS HEART STOLEN.."
..BY THE PRINCE "
"WHY? I .DON'T KNOW."
I KNOW BETTER THAN ANYONE THAT THERE REALLY IS NO OTHER CHOICE THAN TO BELIEVE IT'S POSSIBLE TO CHANGE ANOTHER PERSON'S HEART..
WELCOME BACK, LORCA!
LOOK! MY DRESS IS FINISHED!
SEE? NOW ELISA KNOWS WHAT I M TALKING ABOUT! THAT'S WHY I LOVE HAVING ANOTHER WOMAN AROUND HERE!"
WELL I HAVE BEEN THERE MYSELF
THEN SHALL I PREPARE A SMALL SNACK FOR YOU FOR DURING THE CEREMONY?
I might ask you to call me from the lounge before the ceremony starts.
THE PROBLEM IS, IT'S TIGHT AS IT IS I DON'T THINK I'LL BE ABLE TO EAT ANY OF THE DELICIOUS FOODS AT THE WEDDING!
IT LOOKS BEAUTIFUL ON YOU.
"EVEN THOUGH SHE ACTED AS A SURROGATE MOTHER TO THE PRINCESS, SHE WAS INSTIGATED BY LORD TIGASON'S WIFE INTO SERVING POISONED FOOD TO HER IN THE END CLARIS COMMITTED SUICIDE."
"CLARIS IS THE PRINCESS' FORMER ATTENDANT."
BUT SHE DOES BEAR WATCHING
I HAVEN'T SWALLOWED EVERYTHING THAT MAN SAID

TAK
IT S NOT REVENGE THAT WE SHOULD BE AFTER, WE WHO ARE LEFT BEHIND THAT WON T HELP BUT WHAT WE CAN DO IS WORK TO MAKE SURE THE SAME KIND OF MISFORTUNE DOESN T HAPPEN AGAIN
BUT NO MATTER WHAT WE DO IT WON'T BRING THE DEAD BACK TO US
WE DIDN'T SHARE THE SAME BLOOD, BUT HE WAS DEARER TO ME THAN ANY BLOOD RELATIVE

I THINK THAT'S THE RESPONSIBILITY OF ROYALTY WHO GOVERN A COUNTRY
!
HEH-HEH! DID THAT SOUND KINGLY ENOUGH?
PRINCE LORCA
HAS HE BECOME AWARE OF PRINCE TRILDAN'S PRESENCE?

OH? IN THAT CASE, HERE
ONE MORE THING. IT LOOKS LIKE THERE WILL BE A CHANCE TO POISON THE PRINCESS DURING THE CEREMONY
I IMAGINE THE SUBJECT WAS POSSIBLE PUNISHMENT OF THE APOTHECARY
AFTER NAVARA'S KING ARRIVED THIS MORNING AN EMERGENCY MEETING WAS HELD WITH THE CHIEF VASSALS
ELISA?

NOT TOO LONG AGO, I LOST SOMEONE WHO WAS SPECIAL TO ME, TOO
I UNDERSTAND IT'S NOT SO EASY TO PUT SADNESS BEHIND YOU, IS IT?
YES I CAN SEE THE GARDEN FROM HERE THIS IS WHERE I FEEL MOST AT EASE
PRINCE LORCA
I ALWAYS SEE YOU STANDING HERE
TAK TAK

I SUPPOSE ALL THIS WILL JUST RESULT IN A THORN BEING REMOVED FROM YOUR SIDE
WHATEVER THEY DECIDE IT WON'T BE TO CANCEL THE WEDDING.
NOW THE REST IS UP TO THE OLD MEN I WONDER WHAT THEY'LL DECIDE
?
THERE WILL BE A WEDDING BUT IT WON'T END WELL
OH, NO. EVERYTHING IS GOING ACCORDING TO PLAN
THE POISON USED WILL BE AN UNKNOWN TYPE CONCOCTED BY OUR "FRIEND", BUT PLACED INSIDE THE MEDICINE BOTTLE THAT YOU OBTAINED FROM ARGENT'S PHARMACY
THE PEOPLE WILL THINK THAT ARGENT IS BEHIND THE ASSASSINATION HIS MOTIVE? HE WAS OVERCOME BY JEALOUSY
DURING THE CEREMONY, THE PRINCESS WILL BE ASSASSINATED BY POISON FROM SOMEONE
THIS IS HOW IT'S GOING TO PLAY OUT, CORDA.

SO TRUST US.
AS FOR THE PRINCESS SOMETIMES SHE ACTS LIKE A GIGGLY GIRL, BUT SHE HAS WHAT IT TAKES TO BE A RULER MORE THAN ANYONE
AFTER BEING LAMPOONED AS A "BASTARD CHILD" WITH THOSE RUMORS, I HAVE TO WORK TWICE AS HARD TO GET PEOPLE TO TAKE ME SERIOUSLY
I TRUST YOU, ELISA.
TAK
TAK
TAK
CHFF
HE'S SHARP.
THE KING DIDN'T CHOOSE HIM AS A HUSBAND FOR THE PRINCESS FOR NOTHING
PRINCE LORCA.

I SUPPOSE ALL THIS WILL JUST RESULT IN A THORN BEING REMOVED FROM YOUR SIDE
WHATEVER THEY DECIDE IT WON'T BE TO CANCEL THE WEDDING
NOW THE REST IS UP TO THE OLD MEN. I WONDER WHAT THEY'LL DECIDE...
?
THERE WILL BE A WEDDING... BUT IT WON'T END WELL
OH, NO. EVERYTHING IS GOING ACCORDING TO PLAN.
THE PEOPLE WILL THINK THAT ARGENT IS BEHIND THE ASSASSINATION. HIS MOTIVE? HE WAS OVERCOME BY JEALOUSY
THE POISON USED WILL BE AN UNKNOWN TYPE, CONCOCTED BY OUR "FRIEND" BUT PLACED INSIDE THE MEDICINE BOTTLE THAT YOU OBTAINED FROM ARGENT'S PHARMACY
DURING THE CEREMONY, THE PRINCESS WILL BE ASSASSINATED BY POISON FROM SOMEONE
THIS IS HOW IT'S GOING TO PLAY OUT, CORDA.
SO TRUST US
AS FOR THE PRINCESS. SOMETIMES SHE ACTS LIKE A GIGGLY GIRL, BUT SHE HAS WHAT IT TAKES TO BE A RULER MORE THAN ANYONE
AFTER BEING LAMPOONED AS A "BASTARD CHILD" WITH THOSE RUMORS, I HAVE TO WORK TWICE AS HARD TO GET PEOPLE TO TAKE ME SERIOUSLY
I TRUST YOU ELISA.
TAK
TAK
TAK
CHFF
HE'S SHARP...
THE KING DIDN'T CHOOSE HIM AS A HUSBAND FOR THE PRINCESS FOR NOTHING.
PRINCE LORCA.

HOW'S THIS ONE WORKING MASTER?
AS FOR YOU, CORDA, YOUR MISSION IS TO GET CLOSE TO APOTHECARY ARGENT, THE MAN WHO IS ABOUT TO BECOME A TRAITOR!
I CAN SEE THE MOLD CLOSE UP
EH? LET ME SEE, TOO!
WOWWW! SO THAT'S MOLD...?

AND THEN WHAT ?
YOU DECLARE YOURSELF HEIR TO THE THRONE IN PLACE OF THE PRINCESS?
NO, NO NOW THEY CAN TAKE THE THRONE AND SHOVE IT UP THEIR BACKSIDES
MY DESIRE IS NOTHING SHORT OF THE DESTRUC-TION OF THE COUNTRY.
I'VE SOWED THE SEEDS OF MISTRUST AND REVOLT AMONGST THE CITIZENS OF THIS COUNTRY
BEAZOL IS A POWDER KEG WAITING TO GO OFF. ALL IT NEEDS IS A LIT MATCH.
AND THE DECREPIT KING NO LONGER HAS THE POWER TO KEEP THE SITUATION IN CHECK.

GOOD MORNING YOUR MAJESTY
BONG
BONG
BOTH THE PRINCESS AND PRINCE LORCA HAVE MASTERED THEIR PARTS YOU HAVE NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT
VERY WELL
HOW GO THE PREPARATIONS FOR THE CEREMONY?
ONLY ONE MORE DAY TO GO BEFORE THE WEDDING
ALGON.
I SEE
HEARING THAT SETS MY MIND AT EASE MY DAUGHTER HAS BECOME AN ADULT
"THE VOTE IS NEARLY UNANIMOUS APOTHECARY ARGENT IS TO BE BANISHED FROM BEAZOL"
"I'LL READ OUR DECISION."

YES I MAY EVEN BE ABLE TO IDENTIFY THE CAUSE OF DISEASES
THEN IF YOU MAKE THE GLASS BIGGER, OVERLAY MORE PIECES OF IT, WE MAY BE ABLE TO SEE EVEN SMALLER THINGS!
LULU'S HYPOTHESIS WAS CORRECT
ALL RIGHT! LET'S GET TO WORK IMMEDIATELY ON THE NEXT MODEL!
WHETHER IT BE TRUTH OR MERELY RUMORS, ELEMENTS THAT CAN CREATE CRACKS IN OUR GRAND PLAN SHOULD BE AVOIDED AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE
BUT THIS IS A FRAGILE PERIOD WE'RE IN, ONE IN WHICH THE GOAL IS TO UNITE OUR TWO COUNTRIES
APOTHECARY ARGENT IS THE BENEFACTOR OF BOTH LORCA AND THE PEOPLE OF NAVARA.
THE VOTE IS NEARLY UNANIMOUS. APOTHECARY ARGENT IS TO BE BANISHED FROM BEAZOL

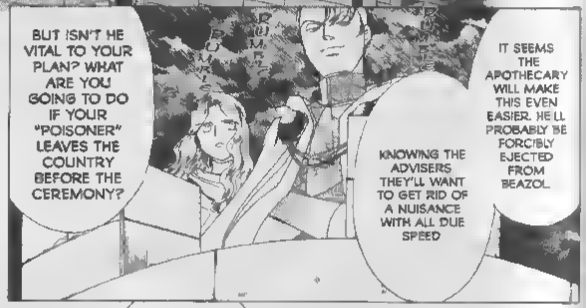
BONG
OH, THAT'S RIGHT. IT'S THE DAY BEFORE THE WEDDING
SWISH
WHA--?! WHAT'S THAT NOISE?!
BONG
BONG
BONG
SO I TRIED ADDING COLORING TO THE SAMPLE TO MAKE IT EASIER TO SEE
EVEN WITH LAYERED PIECES OF GLASS, THERE'S A LIMIT TO HOW WELL I CAN ANALYZE WHAT I SEE.
ARE THERE ANY NEW DEVELOP MENTS?
SODA. TAKE A LOOK AT THIS
MASTER, DIDN'T YOU GET ANY SLEEP?

NOW ON TO THE THIRD STAGE THE BEGINNING OF WHAT WILL BE A VERY LONG DAY
THE POOR FOOLS HAVEN'T GOT AN INKLING OF WHAT THE FUTURE WILL BRING
SO TONIGHT DEAR FRIENDS, LET'S PUT ASIDE RANKS AND DRINK TO THE FUTURE!
TOMORROW SHALL BE A GLORIOUS DAY AT LONG LAST NAVARA AND BEATOL WILL BE MADE ONE AGAIN!

I'VE BEEN GIVING IT SOME THOUGHT AND...
AH, ELISA. ABOUT TOMORROW'S MID-CEREMONY SNACK.
HOW COULD THEY DISAPPEAR AT A TIME LIKE THIS?!
ACTUALLY... NEITHER SIGNOR ALGON NOR SIGNOR CARLI HAVE BEEN SEEN SINCE YESTERDAY EVENING
YOU WANT YOUR FAVORITE... A SHRIMP SANDWICH, RIGHT?
I DIDN'T WANT ELISA TO GET BAWLED OUT LATER FOR BRINGING YOU FOOD
I'VE ALREADY MADE THE ARRANGEMENTS WITH THE HEAD CHEF, GARNA.
LORCA!
IT WOULD BE EVEN MORE SHOCKING IF THE BRIDE FAINTED DURING THE CEREMONY FROM HAVING AN EMPTY STOMACH.
UNBELIEVABLE! THE BRIDE MUNCHING ON A SNACK IN THE MIDDLE OF HER WEDDING CEREMONY... IT'S UNHEARD OF!
She can't rein in her appetite for one day?
THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION, PRINCE LORCA.

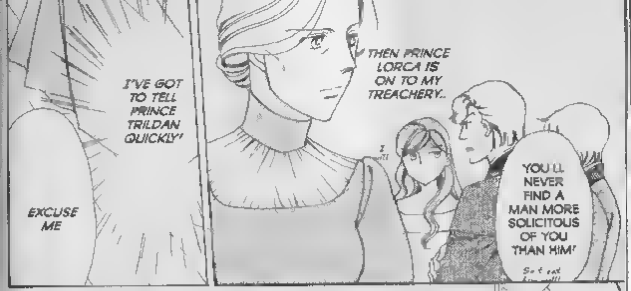
I CAN'T CONFIRM IT, BUT WHAT YOU SEE MOVING AROUND MIGHT JUST BE THE INFECTIOUS DISEASE
WATER I COLLECTED FROM THE HARBOR IN KENT.
THIS ISN'T MOLD! SOME WEIRD THINGS ARE MOVING! WHAT IS THIS?!
...AND BESIDES, YOU'VE MADE THE DISCOVERY OF THE CENTURY! LET'S SHOW IT TO HER!
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?! IF YOU'VE IDENTIFIED AN INFECTIOUS DISEASE, THERE'S NOT A SECOND TO WASTE! IT NEEDS TO BE DEALT WITH IMMEDIATELY...
BUT HER WEDDING IS TOMORROW...
THEN WE HAVE TO TELL THE PRINCESS RIGHT AWAY!
I SUPPOSE YOU'RE RIGHT I COULD AT LEAST GIVE HER A REPORT
I WANT TO ASK HIM ABOUT FATHER'S CONDITION
SAY, WHERE'S ALGON?
BEAZOL CASTLE.

FLASH
TAKE HIM TO A PRIVATE ROOM CARL! AND I WILL MEET HIM

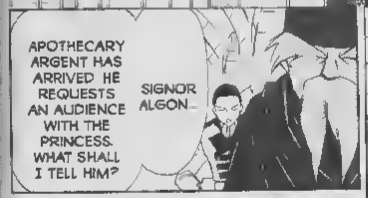

BUT ISN'T HE VITAL TO YOUR PLAN? WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO IF YOUR "POISONER" LEAVES THE COUNTRY BEFORE THE CEREMONY?
KNOWING THE ADVISERS THEY'LL WANT TO GET RID OF A NUISANCE WITH ALL DUE SPEED
IT SEEMS THE APOTHECARY WILL MAKE THIS EVEN EASIER. HE'LL PROBABLY BE FORCIBLY EJECTED FROM BEAZOL

JUST DO IT
IF I CAN—HE'S SEEMED ODD EVER SINCE COMING BACK TO BEAZOL
THAT'S WHERE YOU COME IN, CORDA. YOU'RE GOING TO STOP HIM

BUT THERE'S SOMETHING I WANTED TO REPORT TO THE PRINCESS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE
I APOLOGIZE FOR COMING AT SUCH A HECTIC TIME
GOOD EVENING, APOTHECARY ARGENT
NOK NOK


I'VE GOT TO TELL PRINCE TRILDAN QUICKLY!
EXCUSE ME
THEN PRINCE LORCA IS ON TO MY TREACHERY...
YOU'LL NEVER FIND A MAN MORE SOLICITOUS OF YOU THAN HIM!

T A K


APOTHECARY ARGENT HAS ARRIVED HE REQUESTS AN AUDIENCE WITH THE PRINCESS. WHAT SHALL I TELL HIM?
SIGNOR ALGON...

I HOPE THIS WILL QUELL THE DISTURBANCES A BIT, BUT
AND WHEN WILL THE PUNISHMENT ACTUALLY GO INTO EFFECT?
AT A SUITABLE TIME AFTER THE CEREMONY WILL DO

YOU SHOULD NEVER HAVE DETOXIFIED YOUR BODY.
FIRST, AS THE PRINCESS'S FOOD TASTER SECONDLY, HE WANTED TO MAKE YOU BEAZOL'S ULTIMATE WEAPON—
HIS MAJESTY'S REASONS FOR BUYING YOU WERE TWOFOLD
SIGNOR ALGON!
IF YOU WERE STILL A BASILISK, YOU COULD TRAVEL TO MORD, OUR ENEMY, AND TAKE THE LIVES OF THEIR TOP LEADERS
RIGHT NOW, BEAZOL DOESN'T NEED YOU AS AN APOTHECARY SHE NEEDS YOU AS AN ASSASSIN.
IN A WAR, ASSASSINATION IS THE BEST WAY TO MINIMIZE CASUALTIES AND END HOSTILITIES

...WE WANT YOU TO LEAVE BEAZOL.
IN A NUTSHELL
OH? THEN, YOU GO FIRST
ARGENT
THERE'S SOMETHING THAT WE HAVE TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT, TOO
LEAVE?
WE WISH TO KEEP ORDER IN THIS COUNTRY—
YES AND NEVER COME BACK.
CAN YOU SAY, IN ALL HONESTY, THAT THE RUMOR IS COMPLETELY UNFOUNDED?
—BUT RECENTLY, SEEDS OF CRITICISM AGAINST THE ROYAL FAMILY HAVE BEEN SOWN AND THEY INCLUDE A SCANDAL REGARDING YOU AND THE PRINCESS
YOU'VE BEEN AWAY FROM THE TOWN, SO I'M SURE YOU DIDN'T KNOW THIS.—
LET ME BE FRANK WITH YOU, ARGENT.
THAT'S WHY I'VE DEVOTED MYSELF TO BECOMING THE BEST APOTHECARY IN BEAZOL, TO SUPPORT THIS COUNTRY!
EVEN IF I HAVE A NORMAL HUMAN BODY NOW I CAN'T TRANSCEND THE DIFFERING SOCIAL POSITIONS BETWEEN MYSELF AND THE PRINCESS!
THAT RUMOR HAS ALREADY BEEN PUT TO REST! THE MATTER IS SETTLED!

AHHH!
CRASH
WHAT THE DEVIL DID I GO ALL THE WAY TO CASTORIA FOR...?!
SIGNOR ALGON THERE WAS NO CALL FOR YOU TO GO THAT FAR...
I'M WILLING TO PAY THE PRICE OF BEING HATED FOR CAUSING THAT
BUT A CLEAN BREAK WAS NEEDED INCLUDING ANY LINGERING ATTACHMENTS SO THAT BOTH OF THEM CAN MOVE ON FROM HERE
I KNOW.
BUT HE HAD BECOME A GOOD COMRADE OF OURS
CERTAINLY HE WAS A DISPOSABLE PAWN WITH SLAVE STATUS IN THE BEGINNING

NOTHING MORE NEEDS TO BE SAID JUST GET OUT
FWUMP!
BUT WHAT'S DONE IS DONE
HERE... MONEY TO COVER THE COST OF YOUR RELOCATION
I UNDERSTAND.
KACHA
I KNOW THAT YOU GAVE YOUR WHOLE HEART TO THIS COUNTRY I'M SORRY THAT THINGS WORKED OUT THIS WAY...
OF COURSE I PROMISE
SEE TO IT THAT HE BECOMES AN APOTHECARY IN HIS OWN RIGHT?
JUST ONE THING
WOULD YOU LOOK AFTER SODA?

I'M CORDA.
WHO ARE YOU?
SILVER HAIR
I'LL TAKE CARE OF THAT PAIN.
THAT SMELL...
YOU AND I ARE THE SAME.
ARE YOU THE WOMAN WHO CAME TO MY SHOP BEFORE?

PAT PAT PAT
IT'S STARTED TO RAIN!
BRING EVERYTHING INSIDE!
SIGNOR ALGON
EVEN AFTER ALL THE PAIN I'VE ENDURED...
ARE YOU ARGENT?
OWW.
SHIK!
SO THE PUBLIC WON'T EVEN ALLOW ME TO SUPPORT MY COUNTRY...

I-I'LL TRY.
...WELL? EVEN YOU CAN DO THAT.
WHY DOESN'T HE REALIZE..
E-EXCUSE ME
ZAAAA
...THAT THIS NIGHT-MARE IS A SCENARIO THAT I DREAMED UP?!
HAHAHA-HAHA!!

I SEE... SHE'S A BASILISK LIKE ME.
THE APOTHECARY HAS BEEN EXILED, AS MY PLAN DICTATED.
IN THAT CASE THINK OF ANOTHER WAY
I CAN'T!
SIGNOR GARNA HAS TAKEN OVER THE RESPONSIBILITY OF PREPARING THE PRINCESS A LIGHT SNACK FOR THE RECEPTION. I NO LONGER HAVE A CHANCE TO POISON HER FOOD
BUT
YOU KNOW HOW THE REST GOES, ELISA.
ALL RIGHT LET'S DO THIS
LORCA, EH? CERTAINLY, YOU CAN'T LET YOUR GUARD DOWN AROUND THAT ONE.
I THINK HE KNOWS I'M WORKING WITH YOU
I COULD TELL BY THE LOOK IN PRINCE LORCA'S EYES

I DON'T WANT YOUR SYMPATHY AND BESIDES, I'M NOT...
!
LEAVE ME ALONE
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
ARGENT— HAVE YOU BECOME A—?
THEN THEN THERE'S NOTHING FOR IT

HAS THE EDGE BEEN TAKEN OFF OF YOUR PAIN, ARGENT?
ARE YOU THE BASILISK WHO ATTEMPTED TO ASSASSINATE THE KING OF BEAZOL?
CORDA...
I'VE COME TO MEET YOU.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
BECAUSE ONLY A FELLOW BASILISK CAN COMPREHEND THE GRIEF AND SOLITUDE..
..THAT COMES WITH NOT BEING ABLE TO TOUCH ANOTHER PERSON

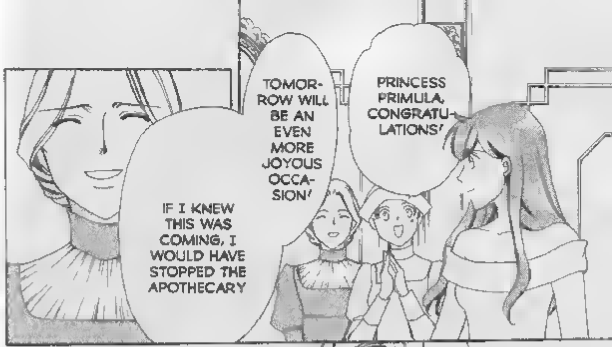
I DON'T KNOW ALTHOUGH HE HEADED OFF IN THE DIRECTION OF THE BORDER
I WONDER WHERE I SHOULD GO CAN'T GO BACK TO LULU'S WITH MY TAIL BETWEEN MY LEGS
"I KNOW"
"YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO HOLD OUT UNTIL IT CRYSTALLIZES COMPLETELY BEFORE THEN, YOU'LL PROBABLY..."
"BUT THAT'S WHAT'S CAUSING YOU THE INTENSE PAIN BECAUSE IT'S CRYSTALLIZING AT A RAPID PACE."
"LET ME WARN YOU I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU BURIED INSIDE YOUR BODY..."
"I DON'T CARE I WANT TO DIE AS A HUMAN BEING NOT A BASILISK."
EVEN IF THAT MEANS I ONLY HAVE A LITTLE TIME LEFT."
"THEN -GOOD BYE, ARGENT. I'M GLAD I WAS ABLE TO MEET YOU."
YOU LET HIM GO? WHY?! YOU HAD THE PERFECT CHANCE!
HE ISN'T A BASILISK ANYMORE ALL OF THE TOXINS ARE OUT OF HIS BODY
I LET HIM GO.
WERE YOU ABLE TO BRING HIM OVER TO OUR SIDE, CORDA?
HE HAD SOMETHING EMBEDDED IN HIS BODY
I'VE NEVER HEARD OF ANY METHOD TO DETOXIFY A BASILISK'S BODY, OTHER THAN GIVING BIRTH
SO WHERE DID HE GO?
BESIDES HIS HEART IS STILL WITH THE PRINCESS. THERE'S NO ROOM FOR ANYONE ELSE
IF A FOREIGN SUBSTANCE ENTERS THE BODY THE BODY'S FLUIDS PROBABLY WORK TO REJECT IT, WHICH RESULTS IN THE POISON INSIDE WEAKENING

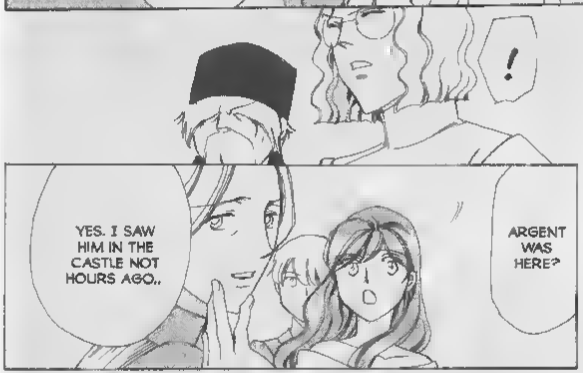
PRINCESS PRIMULA, PRINCE LORCA, I HAVE COME TO TELL YOU SOMETHING IMPORTANT.
EVERYONE, I APOLOGIZE FOR BEING ABSENT SO MANY OF THESE PRECIOUS DAYS.
PRIMULA, YOU HAVE NO OBJECTIONS TO SUCCEEDING TO THE THRONE I TAKE IT?
TOMORROW AT THE SAME TIME AS YOUR WEDDING WE WILL ALSO HAVE A CORONATION
NO.
I HUMBLY ACCEPT IT.
YOUR MAJESTY-

I HOPE IT DOESN'T RAIN THROUGH TOMORROW
IT LOOKS LIKE IT LL CLEAR UP SOON
CAN I DO IT?
I HAVE TO DO IT TO GET EVEN FOR MY DEAD HUSBAND AND NEON!
IT'S TOO LATE TO RETRACE MY STEPS NOW
AH-
I SWORE THAT I WOULD GET REVENGE UPON THIS MAN
YOUR MAJESTY!!
AND I WISH YOU A SAFE JOURNEY, WHEREVER YOU GO.

HE LEFT THE COUNTRY UNDER OUR ORDERS! IT WAS OUR DECISION!
I BEG YOUR FORGIVENESS!
ADONA, WHEN DID YOU ARRIVE IN BEAZOL?
AND WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "HE'S NO LONGER HERE?"
LORCA HE'S NO LONGER IN THIS COUNTRY

WHY WOULD YOU DO SUCH A THING- AND WITHOUT MY PERMISSION?
HE LEFT ?
AND YOU USED THAT AS AN EXCUSE - TO DRIVE HIM AWAY ?
BUT THE RUMORS SPREAD LIKE WILDFIRE TO SURROUNDING COUNTRIES AS WELL -
I TOLD YOU TO IGNORE THEM! YOU AGREED WITH ME!
UNSAVORY RUMORS ABOUT HIM AND THE PRINCESS HAVE BEEN GOING AROUND


PRINCESS PRIMULA, CONGRATULATIONS!
TOMORROW WILL BE AN EVEN MORE JOYOUS OCCASION!
IF I KNEW THIS WAS COMING, I WOULD HAVE STOPPED THE APOTHECARY


!
YES. I SAW HIM IN THE CASTLE NOT HOURS AGO..
ARGENT WAS HERE?

WHY? NO ONE IS AS COMPETENT AS ARGENT
I'M AFRAID ANOTHER APOTHECARY WILL HAVE TO LOOK INTO THE MATTER.
HE SHOULD HEAR THE NEWS AND I WANT TO HEAR THE LATEST ON HIS INVESTIGATION INTO THE HARBOR PLAGUE IN KENT.
THEN CALL HIM BACK!

GARNA, I NEED YOUR HELP
—THE PRINCESS IS IN DANGER!
IT'LL BE ALL RIGHT YOU CAN EXIT OUT THE WINDOW AS LONG AS YOU'RE BACK BY MORNING—
ELISA
PRINCESS, WHY DON'T YOU SEE HIM OFF? LEAVE THE OTHERS TO ME
—I WOULDN'T HAVE AGREED TO BECOME THE NEXT MONARCH!
IF I KNEW I WAS GOING TO HURT HIM LIKE THIS—
"BUT PRINCE LORCA
"I'LL TAKE CARE OF HER FROM THERE."
"ALL RIGHT, LET'S DO THIS. GET THE PRINCESS TO CHASE AFTER ARGENT. MAKE HER GO OUTSIDE."
"DON'T WORRY ABOUT HIM. IF YOU GET THE CHANCE, FEED HIM THE POISON. SO WE'LL CATCH TWO BIRDS WITH ONE STONE."
ARGENT IS NEEDED PRECISELY FOR TIMES LIKE THIS
WHAT BROUGHT THIS ON?
HAVE BEEN TO SEPARATE ARGENT FROM THE PRINCESS AND BEAZOL?
COULD THE PURPOSE BEHIND THE SERIES OF RUMORS
ARGENT!
THE PRINCESS IS GOING TO THE TOWER! WATCH HER!

KACHA
ALL RIGHT THAT OFFICIALLY MAKES ME A CO-CONSPIRATOR IF SOMETHING HAPPENS
KACHA
B-BEG YOUR PARDON, SIR!
A BIT DENSE AREN'T YOU? YOUR FUTURE MASTER IS TELLING YOU THAT HE WANTS TO BE ALONE WITH HIS BETROTHED.
IF YOU LEAVE BY COACH NOW YOU'LL CATCH UP TO HIM
LORCA?
PRINCESS, COME HERE
THANK YOU.
OH AND GIVE THIS TO ARGENT
I'VE GOT ONE WAITING FOR YOU JUST BELOW.
CLIMB DOWN THIS ROPE.
BE CAREFUL.

YOU HAVE MY SUPPORT, TOO.
IT'S ALL RIGHT WITH ME
I CAN'T DO THAT NOT RIGHT BEFORE MY WEDDING
BESIDES I PROMISED HIM THAT I WOULDN'T LOOK BACK
I TRUST YOU, PRINCESS
PRINCE LORCA.
I'M GOING TO LOOK AFTER HER 'TIL TOMORROW MORNING, SO YOU CAN GO
GUARDS! THE PRINCESS ISN'T FEELING WELL
SHALL WE CALL APOTHECARY ZANTAK?
LORCA.
SEE ARGENT OFF AT THE BORDER NOT TO LOOK BACK BUT TO MOVE FORWARD

AHHH I'M THIRSTY ELISA, BRING ME A GLASS OF WINE
I'M PREPARED FOR THAT POSSIBILITY
I'M SURPRISED YOU LET HER GO OFF BY HERSELF. WHAT IF SHE NEVER COMES BACK?
C-CERTAINLY
QUICKLY
THANK YOU.
HERE YOU ARE
"IF YOU GET THE CHANCE, FEED HIM THE POISON."

I KNOW! JUST HAVE A SAFE JOURNEY!
I SWEAR THAT I'LL BE BACK BY MORNING, LORCA.
PRINCESS?

I CAN KEEP IT TO MYSELF
FORTUNATELY, NEITHER THE PRINCESS NOR ANYONE ELSE HAS TO KNOW ABOUT THIS
BECAUSE YOU'RE NOT SOMEONE WHO CAN MURDER PEOPLE
BE CAUSE
WHERE THE MAN WHO HIRED YOU AS AN ASSASSIN IS AND WHAT HE WANTS.
THAT'S WHY YOU'RE GOING TO TELL ME
PRINCE LORCA, WHAT ABOUT THE PRINCESS?
UKK!
ELISA, EVERY SECOND COUNTS HERE!
I CAN'T!

PERHAPS IT'S BECAUSE THE SOIL HERE IS GOOD BUT BEAZOL WINE IS DELICIOUS, ISN'T IT?
WAIT!!
KRSSSH
FORGIVE ME!
I WAS GOING TO POISON YOU... AND THE PRINCESS...
I'VE COMMITTED TREASON!!
AND YET AT THE LAST MOMENT YOU SAVED ME WHY?

CLOP
CLOP
CLOP
ARGENT!
ARGENT!!
!
MY TARGET ISN'T THE PRINCESS. IT'S YOU.
YOU SEE THIS IS WHAT MAKES PRINCES NAIVE

JUST LIKE A WOMAN WHEN YOU REALLY NEED THEM, THEY LET YOU DOWN USELESS, REALLY
ELISA!
WHAT S WRONG?
SO YOU'RE TRILDAN—
MAKING THE PRINCESS GO AWAY WAS THE RIGHT THING TO DO, THEN
BUT I SUPPOSE SOME CREDIT FOR ELISA'S DOUBLE CROSS SHOULD GO TO YOU PRINCE LORCA, AS WELL AS THE KING OF BEAZOL FOR CHOOSING YOU
...AS HIS DAUGHTER'S BRIDE-GROOM
AND IF I DID?
AH-HAH YOU HAD THE PRINCESS ESCAPE WITH INTENTIONS OF HAVING A "KNIGHT" PROTECT HER. I IMAGINE?

ARGENT, I'M NOT GOING WITH YOU BUT THIS TIME, I DO WANT TO GIVE YOU A PROPER SEND-OFF
THAT'S WHY I'VE COME
ALL RIGHT.
ELISA!
ARE YOU OKAY? ELISA!!

HE SAID TO GIVE THIS TO YOU
LORCA PROVIDED ME A HORSE
THANK HEAVENS I FOUND YOU IN TIME!
GOOD LORD, WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
MONEY AND A LETTER?
"I'LL TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR BOTH BEAZOL AND NAVARA THERE ARE PROVISIONS AND LUGGAGE IN THE COACH."
"ESCAPE WITH THE PRINCESS TO SOMEWHERE FAR AWAY AND THEN."
ARGENT...
THERE ARE STILL ENEMIES INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE COUNTRY AFTER ALL.
IT'S DANGEROUS TO BURDEN THE PRINCESS WITH THIS COUNTRY.

AS THE THIRD PRINCE OF NAVARA, I SHALL PROTECT THIS COUNTRY WITH MY LAST BREATH!
DAMN! HE'S BLOCKING THE ONLY ESCAPE!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?! MOVE AWAY FROM THERE!
I PROMISED INFREE AND THE OTHERS THAT I'D TAKE YOU WITH ME!

I'LL CALL FOR HELP
IT'S ALREADY TOO LATE FOR HER
I THINK YOU'D BE BETTER OFF WORRYING ABOUT YOUR OWN WELFARE
THE POISON I HIT YOU WITH WAS A SPECIAL BLEND CREATED BY A FRIEND OF MINE
JUST A SMIDGEN SEEPS INTO YOUR BODY FROM A PINPRICK-SIZED WOUND, BUT THAT'S ENOUGH TO BRING ON DEATH
YOU HAVE PERHAPS SECONDS TO LIVE
UNFORTUNATELY FOR YOU—MY BODY IS USED TO POISON
SO HERE—
—WHY DON'T WE SEE WHO LASTS LONGER?!
AH!
SWIM!

YOU SHOULD HAVE STOPPED TO PUT ON SHOES BEFORE COMING
AH! I WONDER WHAT KIND OF INSECT THAT IS...
I DON'T KNOW
"GRASS FLOWERS, BIRDS CATS "
"I'D WANT TO TOUCH MANY THINGS "
"ARGENT, WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF YOUR POISONOUS BODY WENT BACK TO NORMAL?"
"AND THEN "
SHALL WE HOLD HANDS PRINCESS?
YOU REALLY ARE IGNORANT ABOUT EVERYTHING EXCEPT MEDICINE AREN'T YOU?
OUCH!

TO BE SURE KILLING A FEEBLE OLD MAN IS CHILD'S PLAY.
BUT I DON'T THINK I SHALL LET YOU DIE THAT EASILY AFTER ALL
NO. I M GOING TO HAVE YOU GO THROUGH A HELL WORSE THAN ANYTHING ANY AFTERLIFE CAN DISH OUT. YOU SEE I WAS SUCCESSFUL WITH ONE OF MY GOALS TONIGHT.
...WHAT DID YOU DO...?
I STOLE SOMETHING PRECIOUS FROM YOU

SHUFF!
IF YOU'RE GOING TO MURDER ME GO AHEAD THE NEXT KING IS ALREADY WAITING SHE CAN ASCEND THE THRONE SMOOTHLY WITH OR WITHOUT ME
IT WASN T DIFFICULT TO DISCERN. ONLY A FEW MEMBERS OF THE ROYAL FAMILY KNOW THIS CASTLE S SECRET PASSAGEWAYS
SO YOU'VE FINALLY COME TRILDAN I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU
YOU TUMBLED TO MY PRESENCE. EH, KING OF BEAZOL. SHREWD AS YOU ARE?

LORCA!
I DID THE DIRTY DEED, BUT WHAT WILL OTHER PEOPLE THINK WHEN THEY SEE THIS SCENE?
HA HA HA HA HA!
URK...
PRINCESS, WHAT WAS THAT NOISE? PRINCESS PRIMULA!
BAM BAM!
TA TA TA TA
UNNGGH...

TA TA TA TA
TATA
DAUGHTER!
PRIMULA!
I CAN SEE WHY YOU PUT YOUR CONFIDENCE IN HIM. HE ALMOST TOOK ME DOWN WITH HIM BEFORE THE POISON KICKED IN.
DON'T TELL ME..
CLINK
RELAX. BY THIS TIME, THE PRINCESS HAS RENDEZ-VOUSED WITH THE APOTHECARY
ROARRRR

WHEN THIS WILTS, FORGET ABOUT ME AND FIND YOURSELF ANOTHER FLOWER TO APPRECIATE
PRIN-CESS...
PRINCESS PRIMULA! ARGENT!
IT'S FAREWELL FOR REAL THIS TIME

WELL, THIS IS IT, PRINCESS
ARGENT, THERE'S ONE LAST THING I WANT TO ASK YOU...
WHAT WAS IT?
THAT TIME WE FELL FROM THE BRIDGE, YOU SAID THERE WAS SOMETHING YOU WANTED TO GIVE ME
"MASTER, WERE YOU ABLE TO GIVE THE PRINCESS THAT DIAMOND RING YOU BOUGHT FROM POPOLA?"
IT
I SEE
THEN LET ME GIVE YOU ONE
IT'S GONE.
IT WAS AN UNUSUAL FLOWER I PICKED IN CASTORIA, BUT I NEVER GOT THE CHANCE TO GIVE IT TO YOU AND IT WILTED SO FORGET ABOUT IT

Afterword & Explanation

We finally get to the final "act." When I first began this series, it was supposed to be completed in two volumes, but thanks to all of you, we've gotten this far. In fact, maybe because volumes 1 and 2 ended the story so cleanly, without any dangling plotlines, there were quite a few readers who got the wrong idea, thinking volume two was the end. But, of course, the series did continue and will continue. Please keep reading. Well, my "explanations" seem to be popular, but I don't have much to explicate about this time around, so I'll write about what's new with me. In the afterword of volume 1, I wrote "for a long time, I resisted involving medicine in any of my stories", but since then, I've been very fortunate to have been covered and interviewed for a number of pharmaceutical trade journals. Right now I also do a report manga for one of the trade journals. Because of this series, I've been allowed to cover major drug companies and manufacturers, medicinal plants and herb botanical gardens, etc. Thank you. Whenever I finish a job, whether it involves medicine, manga or both, I look up and realize there have been so many advances in techniques and changes in the field. I think it adds up to that I need to study more. A lot of readers were surprised by the last episode in this volume, but just wait 'til you see what happens next. I hope you'll stick with me to the end. Oh, and recently, I did an interview for a manga information magazine, "Puff" if you're interested, check it out.

Microscope (Chapter 31)

The history of glass microscope lenses goes back earlier than you might think. Glass itself has been discovered in ancient burial mounds of egyptian dynasties, so it seems to have been used by humans for thousands of years. Somewhere around the first and second centuries C.E. at least, humans got the idea of seeing things through magnification. Around the year 1000 C.E. in Italy, lens manufacturing and grinding methods were developed. In the 15th century, opaque colored glass became obsolete with the appearance of transparent crystal glass, and many kinds of optical lenses were created after that. In 1595, dutch spectacle-maker Hans Janssen and his son, Zacharias discovered that if you put two convex lenses together you could see something that's far away in close-up. They sold their discovery in the form of glasses, calling them "miraculous spectacles". Later, Galileo would take a hint from the "miraculous spectacles" and create the telescope. Then the telescope was turned around. By looking at it through the far end, small things would appear large. And so we have the microscope. In 1665, robert hooke discovered cells through using a compound microscope. Later, pasteur and koch would make further advances, all of which paved the way for mendel's early discoveries in genetics.

DETOXIFYING HIS BODY HAS TURNED HIM INTO THE RICE-BRAN MASTER. EVERYTHING HE TOUCHES TURNS TO RICE BRAN.
THIS SALTED RICE BRAN PASTE IS GOOD! YOU MAKE IT?
PRINCESS NO! YOU MUSTN'T EAT STRANGE.
HUH? Brain?
S-SORRY!
ROLL
HEY! WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN MY PRIVATE GARDEN?!
AHHH WHERE'S THE PRINCESS? WAS FIVE YEARS TOO LONG FOR ME TO BE GONE...?
TOTTER...
RICE-BRAN ARGENT CHAPTER 8
STORY BY MINLA

FINALLY THE TITLE RELATES TO THE STORY!

APOTHECARIUS ARGENTUM C/O CMX
888 PROSPECT STREET SUITE 240
LA JOLLA CA 92037

APOTHECARIUS ARGENTUM &THE END

THE COACH OVER THERE IS FROM THE CASTLE, ISN'T IT?
DID YOU TWO CONSPIRE TOGETHER TO ASSASSINATE THE PRINCE AND ESCAPE TO ANOTHER COUNTRY?
PRINCE LORCA AND ELISA WERE MURDERED BY POISON A SHORT WHILE AGO! THE SHOCK MADE HIS MAJESTY COLLAPSE...
THERE YOU ARE!
THEN THE RUMORS WERE TRUE!
TA TA TA TA TA TA
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? MURDERED BY POISON...?
WHAT DO YOU WANT?
PRINCESS PRIMULA, APOTHECARY ARGENT. WE'RE TAKING YOU BOTH INTO CUSTODY ON SUSPICION OF TREASON AGAINST THE STATE!
THIS MEDICINE VIAL WAS FOUND NEXT TO THE PRINCE.

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DC Comics, A Warner Bros. Entertainment Company.

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MPS Ad Studio – Lettering
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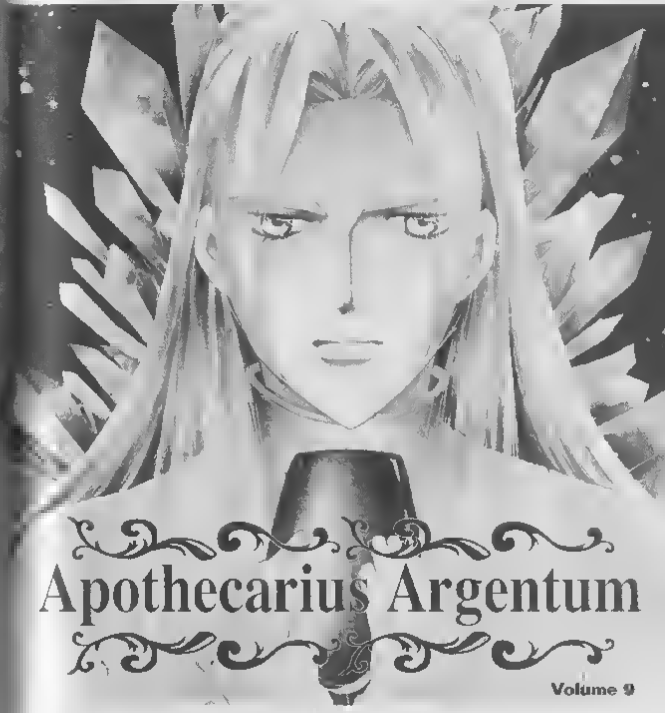
ISBN: 978-1-4012-2227-7

BEAZOL WILL NEVER BE THE SAME!
FIND OUT WHY IN JUNE 2010!



Apothecarius Argentum

Volume 9

By Tomomi Yamashita. Argent and Princess Primula are under arrest for the murder of Prince Lorca! Of course this duo isn't guilty, but that doesn't matter to those who are trying to usurp the throne. If the King doesn't wake up from his coma in a week, Primula's cousin, Tridan, is going to become King of Beazol. Will he finally be able to carry out his plans to destroy the kingdom? Argent confesses to the murder to try and protect the Princess, but will it cost him his life? And when more tragedy strikes, Primula is forced to flee!

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